Sensational

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/38669703.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Franklyn Froideveaux, Freddie Lounds, Alana Bloom, Beverly Katz, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price, Original Female Character(s), Tobias Budge, Mrs. Komeda (Hannibal)
Additional Tags:	Hannibal (TV) Season/Series 01, Established Relationship, Established Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Press and Tabloids, Smut, Masturbation, Voyeurism, Flirting, Jealous Franklyn Froideveaux, Stalking, Porn With Plot, Anal Fingering, Anal Sex, Dirty Talk, Teasing, Foreplay, Not Canon Compliant, Top Hannibal Lecter, Bottom Will Graham, Sex Toys, Vibrators, Semi-Public Sex, Rimming, Cameras, Non-Consensual Voyeurism, Dom/sub Undertones, Overstimulation, Wordcount: Over 30.000, Minor Character Death, Humor, Sexual Roleplay, Office Sex, Sugar Daddy Hannibal Lecter, Kind Of
Language:	English
Collections:	ContosHannibal
Stats:	Published: 2022-04-28 Completed: 2023-02-08 Words: 39,607 Chapters: 7/7

Sensational

by bigfootghostdick

Summary

Franklyn’s obsession with Hannibal Lecter truly knows no bounds.

His obsession only grows worse after being fired as Dr.Lecter’s patient. Feeling slighted by Hannibal's rejection, Franklyn follows him home one evening only to stumble upon something that he never expected to see. Who’s that dark-haired man locking lips with Hannibal right outside his front door?

Overcome with jealousy, Franklyn decides to seek revenge on his tenth psychiatrist. How?

By selling the photos he took of them to Freddie Lounds.

Notes

I hope you enjoy! I am new to posting on AO3, so if you feel I missed any tags, please let me know. I'm not sure how many chapters this will end up being, but expect anywhere from four to six. I will add tags to the story as necessary or as they appear.

It is not clear to me whether Hannibal would be Franklyn's ninth or tenth psychiatrist, but oh well.

No beta. We die like NBC's desire to continue Hannibal past season 3.

An Affinity for Observation

"Never apologize for coming to me."

Hannibal's words rung through Will's mind like a repetitive mantra that had been meticulously crafted to reassure him during his most vulnerable moments where the fragile remains of his sanity were threatening to disintegrate under the immense pressure of Jack's careless insistence that he remain out in the field. Neither of the two men could have truly anticipated the profound effect that the Minnesota Shrike case ultimately had on his already troubled psyche, and despite Jack repeatedly offering his 'words of wisdom' in regards to compartmentalization, the damage had already been done. At Alana's recommendation, Will had reluctantly accepted the services of her mentor for a one-time psychiatric evaluation that, on the surface, seemed innocent enough or at least, as innocent as it could appear in the eyes of a man like Will Graham.

Going into his appointment, Will had fully expected to be rudely picked apart and psychoanalyzed exactly as other psychiatrists had done to him in the past and as a result, he had strode into Dr.Lecter's office with a hardened expression, tense shoulders, and an overly defensive attitude. It would only be when his not-so-tasty thoughts drifted back up to the surface like a putrid corpse in stagnant water that this psychiatrist would realize their mistake and inevitably deny him their rubber stamp of approval, effectively barring him from reentering the field anytime soon. Will honestly wasn't sure whether that would be a blessing or a curse on his end, but it wouldn't matter. This formality was more of a courtesy to his colleagues than himself anyhow. There was a part of him, somewhere within the deepest trenches of his mind, that knew that the dark pieces he carried back with him from the field would remain with him for the rest of his life and no amount of therapy would ever rid him of them.

He couldn't say that he was pleasantly surprised when he ended up receiving a form with Dr.Lecter's rubber stamp on it anyways, but the aftermath of his first appointment with him did open an unexpected door–one that Will wasn't even aware he needed until it was presented to him. Their time spent together was whatever Will wanted it to be and despite him telling Hannibal upon their first meeting that he did not find him interesting, he soon found himself eating those words much like how he ate the man's delectable meals whenever they were offered to him. He couldn't be certain as to when he had first developed his unusual attraction towards his psychiatrist, but nevertheless, it wasn't long before those feelings had begun to take root. It was wholly and utterly inappropriate, though Hannibal would be amongst the first to insist that beyond the initial psychiatric evaluation that the FBI had mandated he receive, Will was not formally considered to be his patient. They merely had conversations.

"Will, show me how you pleasure yourself."

The rich cadence of Hannibal's accented voice had always been a pleasant one. It washed over Will's senses and settled itself within the heated core of his body where arousal had long since taken hold of him.

He remembered that night so vividly. Hannibal had insisted that Will join him for dinner and the most frightening part of it all had been how easily the words “of course” had slipped out right past the profiler’s lips. The main course had consisted of a filet mignon pan seared to nothing short of absolute perfection with a side of what were perhaps the best mashed potatoes Will had ever been served. When paired with the rich cherry and currant flavors of an equally exquisite Cabernet Sauvignon dancing across his tongue, Will had nearly moaned in his seat at Hannibal’s lavish table. With any luck, Hannibal would be able to draw that moan out of him along with many others before the night was over.

As luck would have it, he'd succeeded in doing exactly that.

“Observation is one of the many ways we learn,” Hannibal reminded.

“Do you have an affinity for observation, Dr.Lecter?” Will had never considered himself to be a particularly shy man in the bedroom, but the weight of Hannibal’s gaze on his bare body as he sat at the foot of the man’s plush bed with each of his legs propped up onto the cushioned bench in front of it had made him want to slink back into the dark teal comforter that rested beneath him.

“No more than yourself, Will,” Hannibal answered while leaning back and folding his hands neatly across his lap. He had seated himself directly across from Will in one of the black, leather chairs that were positioned to be little more than an arm’s length away from his bed. “I simply wish to learn more about your body.”

“You’re a doctor. You should know plenty about bodies.” Although it sounded as though Will was attempting to argue with him, he really wasn't.

“I do,” Hannibal confirmed, his head inclining slightly in Will’s direction. “but I have a particular interest in knowing the way that yours works.” Hannibal had then paused to consider something before continuing. “Tell me, is there any aspect of this that is making you uncomfortable?”

Will knew better than to make any claim towards Hannibal being his psychiatrist. He didn’t pay the other man for any of the time they'd spent together and beyond a singular invoice for that pesky psychiatric evaluation, the FBI hadn’t made any further payments on his behalf either. If Will did have any hang ups about this, it wasn't due to any supposed ‘breach’ of doctor-patient ethics.

Maybe he really had gone shy.

“Nothing beyond anyone’s ingrained sense of modesty, I suppose,” Will answered, his shapely thighs pressing together in that moment to further emphasize his point.

Hannibal was silent at first while he slowly rose from his seat, causing Will’s already racing heart to nearly pound right out of his chest. Within a few short strides, Hannibal had reached the edge of the bench and Will watched while the other man placed a single hand on each of his bent knees. The intensity of Hannibal’s gaze alone had been enough to make Will’s cock twitch in anticipation for what was to come.

“Perhaps that is something you should begin unlearning while you’re here with me,” Hannibal suggested. “May I?”

Will nodded a bit too eagerly for his own liking, but the pleased expression that settled onto Hannibal’s face at that moment had made it more than worth it. With a bit of gentle nudging from Hannibal’s hands, Will spread his thighs apart to reveal the thoroughly engorged cock that stood between them. Will could have sworn that he heard Hannibal’s breath hitch in his throat as he visually devoured the lewd spread of pale flesh presented before him. “You are gorgeous, Will,” Hannibal was swift to compliment him, his smoldering gaze still fixated upon Will’s cock as he spoke. “You have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of.”

It was then that Will realized just how painfully hard he’d become in the span of time that it took for him to reach this point. His head had been swimming ever since he and Hannibal had first set foot into this room. Their entry had been unceremonious at best, a messy clash of teeth and tangled limbs, and Will honestly wasn’t sure where in the night it had all begun. All he could think about now was the intense feeling of arousal burning through his body. Even so, he'd still made no move to take his aching cock in hand.

“Still feeling modest?” Hannibal’s words broke through the foggy haze that had drifted over Will’s mind and the sudden intrusion of noise helped to guide him back into reality.

Will had caught the slight amusement in his voice just then, which soon earned Hannibal an uncharacteristic chuckle from the more bashful man. “There’s nothing modest about this,” he said, the remnants of a smile still lingering on his face. “But that’s the point now, isn’t it?” Will let out a soft sigh while reaching down between his parted thighs to finally curl his fingers around the stiff base of his cock. If Hannibal really did harbor a certain affinity for observation, there wouldn't be any harm in indulging it.

“Alright. Are you ready to learn?”

“Will? Will!”

On most days, Jack’s booming voice was enough to pierce through just about anything, including Will’s dissociative daydreams.

“Jesus!” Will drew in a sharp, shaky breath of air as he was being forcibly plunged back into a much harsher reality. He couldn’t deny that his classroom wasn’t exactly the ideal location for him to be daydreaming about his thrilling liaisons with a man who most certainly wasn’t his psychiatrist, but he wasn’t about to admit to those indecent thoughts out loud. In fact, he would much rather have Jack believe that their most recent case had merely left him stuck in a dark place for a bit longer than usual.

Will didn’t even need to look up at Jack to know that the other man was presently staring at him. He could already picture his colleague's brow furrowing in a blend of both mild confusion and genuine concern, but fortunately for Will, he had a knack for keeping Jack’s concerns at bay.

“Alright,” With a heavy sigh, Jack rudely tossed the manilla envelope he’d been holding down onto Will’s desk, causing its contents to scatter out across the already disorganized

desktop. “I know that not feeling like yourself is kind of what you do, but for God’s sake, Will. This is getting ridiculous. Any time I come down here to see you anymore, you’re staring off into space. What’s been going on with you, huh? Is it our last case?”

Will’s lips thinned while he gave a short nod in response. “Something like that, yes.”

Jack hesitated before taking a tentative step closer to Will’s desk. “I didn’t break you this last time, did I?” As if he were attempting to silently apologize for the slight mess he’d created, Jack then reached out to begin gathering up the loose sheets of paper on top of his profiler’s desk.

Will glanced over just in time to catch a glimpse of the gruesome photographs that were paper clipped to a few of the documents. Whether the grotesque scenes of mangled bodies depicted within them were the work of the Ripper or his Copycat Killer had yet to be determined. “No, no. I just…need some time is all. I’ll be back to normal soon enough.”

“There’s hardly anything normal about you, Will,” Jack said while slipping everything back into the manilla envelope. “Have you been attending your therapy sessions with Dr.Lecter?”

It was then Will’s turn to sigh. “I already told you, it’s not therapy. I don’t need therapy despite whatever it is that you or those absurd TattleCrime articles may think about me. You knew I was damaged goods before you started asking for my help. All that Hannibal and I do is talk.”

“I didn’t realize that you were on a first name basis with him,” Jack pointed out.

“I’m on a first name basis with you and Alana,” Will countered. “How would Hannibal be any different? I consult with him on our cases and solving them is a team effort.” He tried his best to keep his overall tone of voice as even as he possibly could despite the panicked thrumming of his heart, though he feared that it still came off as sounding a little too defensive.

There was a long pause before Jack spoke again. “I suppose you have a point,” he said before gesturing back down towards the file on Will’s desk. “In any case, whenever you do see him again, have him look over this case file here. The Ripper and our Copycat Killer are still out there and we’re barely any closer to catching either one of them now than we were before. The more time that passes by without any solid leads, the more people will die and I sincerely doubt that you’ll be able to handle much more of this bloodshed before you have no choice but to get some honest to God therapy whether you like it or not.”

With that, Jack turned on his heels and exited the lecture hall through the center aisle that led up to a set of double doors, leaving Will to review the file he’d left behind.

Hannibal wasn’t the type of man to scoff, sigh, or even roll his eyes whenever he felt annoyed, but if there was anyone who could inspire him to start, it was Franklyn.

Admittedly, Hannibal had been wary of taking him on as a patient. He could deal with neurosis and all of the inappropriate behaviors that could potentially come along with it. He was a psychiatrist after all, but it hadn't taken long for him to realize that his initial reservations weren't unfounded in the slightest. The unusually thick patient file he'd received on Franklyn should have hinted at what was in store for him.

Franklyn's clingy personality was off-putting at best, but when combined with his newfound obsession for his tenth psychiatrist, it bordered on insufferable. He'd made multiple, increasingly desperate attempts at catching Hannibal's attention outside of their formal appointment hours together and as a result, Hannibal had taken it upon himself to keep a private log of each incident as it occurred or was later brought to his attention, usually by Franklyn's own admission. Everything from mirroring the way he dressed to following him around in the cheese aisle of a grocery store had been carefully recorded in a small, black notebook that Hannibal kept tucked away in his desk drawer. This whole matter would feel almost comical if not for the great ire that Hannibal was beginning to feel over Franklyn's blatant disregard for personal boundaries.

Of course, Hannibal didn't feel threatened by a man like Franklyn, but his obsessive behavior was undeniably problematic. He wanted something that Hannibal would never be willing to give him, which was why he, like every other psychiatrist that Franklyn had seen up to this point, fully intended to drop him as a patient.

"It makes me sad that I have to pay to see you," Franklyn admitted. "I want you to be my friend."

There was a long pause before Hannibal spoke next, causing the man seated across from him to sigh. "I'm a source of stability and clarity for you, Franklyn. I am not your friend," he said carefully.

"I'm a great friend," Franklyn declared before moving on to discuss Michael Jackson and how he wished to 'touch greatness'.

Although odd, Hannibal had no reason to steer their conversation in a different direction. In fact, he was thankful that, at least for the moment, Franklyn wasn't pressing him any further about the issue of their nonexistent 'friendship'.

Until he inevitably broached the topic once more, leaving Hannibal with no other choice but to put a permanent end to not only Franklyn's foolish ideas, but his borderline stalker-like behavior as well.

"I'm sorry, Franklyn, but I think you should see another doctor."

As Hannibal expected, Franklyn was instantly taken aback by this. Offended, even. "You're giving me a referral?"

"Yes, I am," Hannibal confirmed.

Franklyn shot back almost instantly. "You were a referral!"

“I’m also part of the problem,” Hannibal countered.

“Nine times,” Franklyn said while holding up the same amount of fingers on his hands. “I can count the number of times I’ve been dumped by a psychiatrist on two hands!”

“You focus too much on your therapist, and not enough on your therapy,” Hannibal explained, his tone even and unfeeling. “In light of that, I am referring you to another psychiatrist, which means that this will be our last session together.”

The news struck a chord with Franklyn, who abruptly stood from his chair and threw his hands up in exasperation. “Is wanting a friend really that terrible?” he spat.

“Franklyn, you need to understand that neither myself nor any respectable psychiatrist that you may come across in the future would ever seek out your company outside of your appointments with them. Doing so would be unethical,” Hannibal said bluntly. “Furthermore, your conduct with me throughout the time that you have been under my care has been inappropriate. You visit the places that you believe I would frequent in the hopes of finding me there. Do you understand how this type of behavior could be a cause for concern?”

At that, Franklyn's existing frown deepened. “Oh, come on. What? Do you think that I’ve been stalking you?”

“No,” Hannibal lied. “but what you’ve been doing has been inappropriate nonetheless. As I stated earlier, I will be referring you to another psychiatrist. Our time here is done, Franklyn. You may leave.”

With that, he rose from his seat, then led Franklyn out of his office and into the adjoining lobby. He halfway expected the terribly neurotic man to argue with him further on the matter, but that did not end up being the case. Instead, Franklyn left his practice without making any more of a fuss than he already had, which ultimately left Hannibal to wonder if this truly was going to be the last time he crossed paths with him.

He sincerely hoped that it was.

Daydreams

Chapter Notes

My apologies for the wait on this. I hope you all enjoy! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Good evening, Will. Please, come in," Hannibal greeted Will with a notable warmth in his gaze as he welcomed the other man into his office for their usual seven o' clock appointment.

Unbeknownst to Will, Hannibal had taken care to carve out that additional time slot in his appointment book just so he could enjoy the pleasure of the younger man's company without needing to fuss over his other responsibilities. Prior to meeting Will, seven in the evening had merely represented the time of day that Hannibal stopped seeing patients. More often than not, the quiet hours that followed would be mundane at best, but ever since he and Will had started growing closer in their arguably unorthodox relationship, it had come to signify an exciting new beginning for the both of them.

As always, Hannibal's choice of attire was impeccable. Will wouldn't have expected anything less from a man of Hannibal's status and while he certainly admired how those bespoke, three-piece suits hung on the doctor's lean frame, they would ultimately reach a point in the night where the extra layers of expensive fabric would become nothing more than an obstacle for Will to overcome when his desire for intimacy overpowered his unspoken need for the mental clarity that Hannibal provided him.

It wasn't out of the ordinary for Will to be feeling antsy on any given day. He'd spent many evenings pacing all around Hannibal's office while they discussed a broad variety of topics that, at some point or another, would always lead to Will insisting that none of it constituted therapy, but the specific reason for his restlessness had since changed. For once, his not-so-tasty thoughts weren't forcing their way back into the forefront of his mind and although many of his nights were still being plagued by bad dreams, his day-to-day life didn't feel quite as exhausting as it once did.

After stepping beyond the threshold, Will didn't waste any time in tugging Hannibal down into the first of many kisses that they would come to share throughout the evening, their lips brushing together in a moment of warmth and longing.

"I trust your day went well?" Hannibal asked after they parted.

Will nodded. "As well as it could when you consider the uh…nature of my job. Though, I've been kind of…distracted most of the day."

The pair stepped further into Hannibal's office and once they reached the center of the room, each man then took their designated seats across from one another. Although he'd never mentioned it to Hannibal directly, Will had been observant enough to notice that the distance between the two chairs had gradually gotten smaller over time. It was a minor detail that Will has since come to appreciate.

"What's on your mind?"

"Us. The things we've done together. I…I can't stop thinking about it really–about you," Will admitted. "I was in the lecture hall earlier today. I had already finished up with my class so Jack stopped by to hand me some files for the case we've been working on, but when he came in, I was um…I was off in my own little world."

Hannibal leaned forward in his chair, his forearms coming to a rest on top of his knees. "It sounds like you were daydreaming, Will. Do you find yourself doing this frequently?"

Will chuckled. "Please. I don't need you to help me get to the root cause of my daydreaming. I already know the answer."

"And what do you believe that answer is?" Hannibal asked this as though he wasn't aware of it himself.

Try as he might, Will could no longer suppress the wide grin that had been threatening to overtake his face since they started talking. "Well, it's sitting right in front of me."

Hannibal looked back at Will, the light crinkling at the outer edges of his eyes revealing the amusement he felt over the playful nature of their conversation. "There's a correlation between my presence in your life and the frequency of your daydreams," he said thoughtfully. "Though, I'm not sure that I would be so quick to conclude that I am the sole cause for them. Perhaps this behavior is rooted in something else?"

"Oh, quit!" Will laughed while extending an arm out to give Hannibal a gentle slap on the shoulder, causing the older man across from him to let out a short chuckle right alongside him. "You're the only cause of my daydreams and you know it!"

"Then would you care to tell me what your daydreams consist of?"

Will's initial response wasn't a verbal one. He couldn't summon any words right at that very moment even if he tried. No, his mouth had suddenly gone dry and the dustings of a warm blush were beginning to creep up onto his pale cheeks. Instead, he drew in a deep breath and quickly averted his gaze from Hannibal's.

"Tell me, Will."

He knew all too well just how ridiculous his bashfulness was. There wasn't a single inch of his body that hadn't already been explored by Hannibal's wonderfully skilled hands and yet here he was, practically squirming in his seat at the mere thought of being made to describe one of their prior entanglements out loud.

Finally, Will managed to get past his own embarrassment long enough to force the first few words out. “It was um…I was thinking about our first night together,” he began after taking another deep breath to steady himself. “When we were in your room and you were… watching me.” His last two words came out as a faint whisper, but Hannibal was still more than close enough to hear them.

“I see, and how does that make you feel?”

At that, Will flashed him a curious look. “Is this a therapy session or foreplay?”

“Why can’t it be both?” Hannibal suggested, smirking.

“I’m not all that interested in receiving therapy,” Will began before glancing up at the clock that hung on the wall behind Hannibal. “We still have forty minutes left for our session,” he pointed out. “I don’t think it would be a loss to either one of us if we decided to cut this short and head back to your place, now would it?”

Hannibal gave a soft hum in turn while he considered Will’s proposal. As enticing as it was, he also didn’t want to relinquish Will from his hold so easily. “Perhaps not, but a good relationship is not without compromise. Give our session twenty more minutes of your time and I will give you what you want,” he offered.

“Fifteen.”

“I told you my terms, Will. Twenty.”

“Fifteen and I’ll sit in your lap while we talk?” Will bargained.

“I’ll accept only if you agree to continue our conversation where it left off.”

“Deal.” Will practically hopped across the short distance between their two chairs and within seconds, had settled himself into Hannibal’s lap with his legs swung over the armrest of their now shared seat.

Hannibal took a brief glance at his watch to take a silent note of the time before placing one of his hands at the center of Will’s back while the other came down to rest on the thigh closest to him. “I believe the last question I asked you was how do your daydreams make you feel?”

“And which of my daydreams are you referring to?” Will seemed to be in a cheeky mood this evening.

Hannibal knew that there was no real need for him to remind Will of anything, but he entertained him. For now, anyway. “The one you told me about when our session first began.”

“Ah, that one. It makes me feel…impassioned.”

“In what way?”

“As if you don’t know.”

“Enlighten me, Will.” Hannibal gave the other man’s thigh a gentle squeeze. He knew exactly what he was doing.

At first, Will couldn’t say it. He was usually fine with dirty talk, but there was something about the intensity of Hannibal’s presence that always made forming the words so much harder for him. His cheeks were now burning brightly with embarrassment and judging by the expectant look on Hannibal’s face, he needed to start getting over it sooner rather than later.

“In a way that makes me want to do it again,” he managed.

“Would you like for us to repeat that night?”

Will shook his head. “No. I need more than a repeat. A lot more, actually.”

“Then you must communicate those needs with me, Will.”

The next breath that Will took was a lot shakier than he expected it to be. “Alright. I need more than just you watching me. I want to feel you and I…and I want…H-Hannibal!”

From the moment Will had started speaking again, Hannibal had begun sliding his hand up further along Will’s clothed thigh and now, his fingers were brushing up against the crotch of his pants. “Please, Will. Continue.”

Despite himself, Will couldn’t help but spread his thighs apart a bit further as a silent invitation for Hannibal to continue. “I…okay. I–um, I want you to touch me more like…like how you are now. Yes, like that. I want this, but more.”

Hannibal was now using the palm of his hand to press lightly into Will’s groin. He used just enough pressure to garner interest, but the purposeful and distinct lack of friction left Will wanting more. In an effort to get it, Will attempted to roll his hips up into Hannibal’s open hand, but his efforts were soon thwarted by the sudden and infuriating removal of that same hand. He nearly groaned at the loss of it.

“Hannibal, please…”

“What is it that you would like for me to do for you, Will?”

“God,” Will actually groaned this time and tossed his head back. Hannibal had a great many talents, which included getting exactly what he wanted out of Will no matter the circumstances.

Will’s prior inhibitions were replaced almost entirely by his mounting frustration, which gave him the courage to finally make his desires known. “I want you to put your hand back on my dick and actually touch me,” he said while lifting his head back up just in time to catch the smug look on Hannibal’s face.

Hannibal obliged Will by placing his hand back over his groin. “Is that all?”

Will wanted to curse him at that moment, but the familiar warmth that was starting to spark through his belly as his lover began palming him through the front of his jeans convinced him to hold his tongue. “Having you fuck me at some point tonight would be nice too, but I’ll take this for now.”

Will didn’t allow Hannibal enough time to respond with what would have surely been yet another teasing question. He honestly wasn’t sure if he could handle hearing any more of them, so he instead leaned forward to capture Hannibal’s lips with his own. He fully intended for this kiss to serve as a distraction and with how attuned Hannibal was to Will’s personality, it didn’t take very long at all for the other man to catch on to this little tactic. Though at this point, Will’s lips felt far too good for him to care anymore.

The light pressure against Will’s hardening cock soon turned into firm strokes through the fabric as Hannibal’s fingers molded over the solid outline that had formed. Ever so slowly, he dragged his hand along the length of it before sliding back down, creating just enough friction to instill a greater sense of need within him. His efforts–or a strategic lack thereof–soon had their intended effect. After suddenly breaking their kiss, another frustrated sound escaped Will’s throat while he brought his hand down to bat Hannibal’s away. His impatience was obvious as his eager fingers worked quickly to undo the fly of his jeans and relieve some of the strain.

Somewhere within the lustful haze of Will’s mind, he knew that even if they were to stay here throughout the remainder of his session, there wouldn’t be enough time for them to properly indulge one another. Although office sex was a fantasy that both men shared, Hannibal wasn’t quite ready to defile his work space just yet, which meant that at some point soon, they would need to pry themselves off of each other long enough to make the short trip down to the doctor’s home. Out of his fifteen minutes, Will wasn’t sure how many were left, but he could certainly find out.

“You have five minutes left, Will.” As always, Hannibal’s intuition was flawless.

“Five minutes, hm?” There wasn’t much that either of them could accomplish within such a short time frame, but Hannibal’s earlier teasing had left Will feeling particularly bold and just a tad bit vengeful. After all, it wouldn’t be fair if he was the only one stuck driving with an erection.

Without another word, Will turned, then pushed himself up and off of Hannibal’s lap. In one, fluid motion, he sank down to his knees and since Hannibal’s legs were already spread apart, it didn’t take much for Will to wedge himself between them. As soon as he settled his gaze onto the crotch of Hannibal’s trousers, he saw the tell-tale beginnings of a bulge pushing through the seams. Perfect.

Will placed a hand at the bottom of each of Hannibal’s thighs, then slid them upwards. The closer his fingers drew to Hannibal’s half-hard cock, the more he dipped them inwards. Once his fingertips were brushing up against it, Will took his dominant hand and grasped at what he could through the fancy cloth that separated him from the warm flesh that lay just beneath it.

“There won’t be enough time for that,” Hannibal warned, though he made no move to stop Will.

“No, there won’t be,” Will agreed, smirking. “But I do have just enough time to get you hard for me.”

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For what felt like the one hundredth time that hour, Franklyn anxiously checked the time, his eyes darting across the dashboard of his car to once again settle upon the same digital clock that never changed quickly enough for his liking. Now, it read seven thirty on the dot and he could only groan at the sight. This meant that there was still a half-hour left in Dr.Lecter’s final appointment of the day. Franklyn hadn’t been able to catch who exactly had entered his former psychiatrist’s practice just a half-hour earlier, but it didn't matter. He would find out. He wanted to find out everything he possibly could about his comings and goings.

Since being dumped as his patient, Franklyn was itching to know who Dr.Lecter deemed worthy enough to be his friend. What qualities did these people possess that, in Dr.Lecter’s opinion, he somehow lacked? What made *them* so special? Surely, there must be someone out there in this world who has earned the privilege of Dr.Lecter’s attention outside of his practice as a psychiatrist.

Franklyn shifted in his seat to glance back down at the digital camera that sat in the passenger seat beside him. He’d taken care to disable the soft, clicking sound that came along with the shutter, but what about its other functions? Was he absolutely certain that he’d turned off the flash as well? Franklyn reached out to snatch the camera up into his hands and began scrolling through its settings to ensure that everything was as it should be. He double, then triple checked the tiny icons on its screen and now that he’d put those fears to rest, he casually lifted his gaze and looked back at the front entrance to Dr.Lecter’s practice. He fully expected to see nothing, but instead found Dr.Lecter emerging with what appeared to be a younger man in tow.

“Huh?” Franklyn leaned forward and used a single hand to brace himself against the steering wheel while he narrowed his eyes at the confusing scene. Wait, what time was it?

One swift glance back at the clock revealed that it was only seven thirty-five–a full twenty-five minutes before Dr.Lecter’s session was set to end. How strange.

Franklyn rushed to aim the camera at the two men before they each climbed into their respective vehicles. Of course, the rapidly diminishing sunlight didn’t exactly create the ideal conditions for photography, but the quality of the images Franklyn captured wasn’t quite as important to him as the quantity. After taking a handful of pictures that he could only hope turned out well, he tossed the camera back into the passenger seat, then returned both of his hands to the steering wheel and watched while a flash green station wagon backed out onto the road. Moments later, Dr.Lecter’s Bentley followed suit and it looked as though both men were heading in the same direction.

With his curiosity now piqued, Franklyn turned the key to his ignition and slowly pulled out onto the same road to trail behind the two cars, though he remained mindful of his proximity

to them. His eyes remained fixed to Dr.Lecter's license plate up in the distance and it wasn't until he spotted the sudden flash of a turn signal from the left tail light that he bothered to look at anything else around him.

Franklyn slowed his speed ever so slightly while he took in his surroundings. He had always imagined that Dr.Lecter's home would be an outward reflection of his refined tastes, as was the case for every other aspect of his life, and to receive confirmation of that made Franklyn's heart race with excitement. He couldn't wipe his ear-to-ear grin off of his face as he drove another block down the road, then parked his car off to the side and killed the engine.

Franklyn undid his seatbelt before hurriedly grabbing his camera out of the passenger seat and slinging the attached strap over his neck. He practically slammed his car door shut before turning to make the short trip back to Dr.Lecter's residence. It wasn't long before the gray, painted fence he spotted earlier reentered his line of vision, but the sight of it caused Franklyn to abruptly stop in his tracks. What if Dr.Lecter or the man accompanying him here tonight hadn't gone inside yet? He couldn't risk being seen like this, right outside of his former psychiatrist's home with a digital camera dangling from his neck.

It would be fine though, right? He would be fine. All he wanted out of this were a few more pictures and once he had those, he would be on his way.

Having strengthened his resolve, Franklyn approached the fence line and crouched down just enough to remain out of sight. He readied his camera in his hands with his index finger resting over the shutter button and pushed forward, inching his way closer to the open gate. Ever so slowly, he peeked around the corner.

The sight that ultimately greeted him at the end of the narrow walkway nearly caused Franklyn to stumble out into the open. Before that could actually happen, however, he scrambled to regain his footing against the concrete, then turned to lock his wide-eyed gaze onto the amorous scene that was actively unfolding before him. Out of everything he could have pictured Dr.Lecter doing in his spare time, locking lips with another man right outside his front door wouldn't have made it onto the list.

So, Dr.Lecter had outright refused Franklyn's friendship on the basis of him being his patient, but he apparently had no qualms about making out with this one?

Franklyn's heart wrenched at the realization. What exactly had Dr.Lecter said to him about "ethics" again?

After figuratively picking his jaw back up from the sidewalk, Franklyn's expression soured and he moved to aim the lens of his camera directly at the scandalous lovers as they continued to press into one another. The tip of his finger tapped quickly against the shutter button to capture as many images of them as he possibly could within a short span of time. It was at that moment that he became abundantly thankful for the warm, outdoor lighting that hung right above them as it helped to illuminate every detail against their dim surroundings.

Franklyn wasn't sure what he would ultimately end up doing with these photos. The sting of Dr.Lecter's rejection was still fresh and now that he'd managed to gain a first-hand glimpse

into the psychiatrist's private life, he felt as though something needed to be done about the blatant hypocrisy he'd just uncovered.

———

Will spent the short drive to Hannibal's home with one hand gripped a bit too firmly around the steering wheel while the other rested over the straining bulge in his jeans. His eyes flicked up from the road ahead to glance over at the reflection of Hannibal's Bentley through his rearview mirror and he couldn't help but wonder if the other man was doing the same. Images of Hannibal sitting there in the driver's seat with his fly hastily zipped down and his hand sliding along his cock flashed through Will's mind, causing a rush of heat to pulse through his own loins. Even if Hannibal was choosing to display more of his usual restraint, Will knew that he couldn't be faring any better than he was.

Patience was a virtue that Hannibal had long since mastered, but unlike him, Will was anything but patient when it came to their pleasure. When they arrived at Hannibal's home, he roughly yanked his gear shift into park and climbed out of his car before hastily making his way up to the front entrance. Hannibal, of course, wasn't far behind and before he could even slide his key into the door, he felt a harsh tug at the collar of his suit jacket.

"Will–" Hannibal wanted to chastise Will for both the rough treatment of his suit and his careless lack of situational awareness, but any thoughts of doing so vanished the moment he felt his lover's soft lips crash into his own.

He knew that he shouldn't be allowing himself to indulge Will like this, out in the open for any wandering eyes to see. The more logical portion of his mind was urging him to break away before this became anything more, but the welcoming heat of Will's body against his made it all too easy to ignore its silent warnings. Hannibal's hands came down to rest on the curved small of Will's back while he returned the kiss with an equal amount of fervor behind each press of his lips. Then came a teasing nip followed by a swipe of Will's tongue and all the while, the younger man's fingers were inching their way below the waistband of Hannibal's pants. That final nudge was almost enough to send what little that remained of Hannibal's self-control crumbling.

Almost.

"Will, please." There was clear reluctance in Hannibal's voice as he broke their kiss and moved to pry Will off of him long enough to unlock the door. He could hear a disgruntled noise coming from behind him as he pushed the door open and ushered them both inside.

Will managed to wait long enough for the door to click back into place before his hands started to seek out Hannibal once more. His nimble fingers soon found the singular button on the front of Hannibal's suit jacket and with a quick, pinching motion, it was undone. He did the same with the waistcoat underneath it and with the fabric now splayed open, Will wanted nothing more than to divest Hannibal of his clothing entirely.

"Take it off," he said, his voice sounding a little breathless from their earlier kissing. "The jacket, the vest, all of it."

Hannibal complied and allowed each garment to slide down from his shoulders. “I should ask the same of you,” he replied while moving to drape them over his arm. “Your coat, Will.”

Will was much less graceful in his movements as he tugged his jacket off and tossed it at the nearest hook on Hannibal’s coat rack, not caring if it actually made it. From there, he hurried to kick off his shoes while his hands flew up to the collar of his flannel shirt to begin undoing the long line of buttons that ran down the front. He only managed to get a quarter of the way down before Hannibal stepped in to take over.

Soon enough, Will was shrugging off his shirt and much to Hannibal’s dismay, he discarded it somewhere on the floor. Upon seeing this, Hannibal looked as though he wanted to comment on it, but right as he had opened his mouth to speak, Will reached out to snatch the jacket and waistcoat from him before tossing them onto the floor as well.

For a split second, Hannibal was taken aback by such a bold display from Will– *his* Will–but he couldn’t find it within himself to be upset over it. Clothing could be laundered and his suits dry cleaned, but having Will naked and wanting in his arms was something that he refused to wait any longer for.

Except as it stood, Will wasn’t naked, or in his arms.

Without warning, Hannibal leaned in to quite literally remedy the latter issue by hooking his arms behind Will’s back and knees before hoisting him up bridal-style. Will gasped at the sudden feeling of weightlessness, but did not protest as he was carried into Hannibal’s bedroom and laid out over the other man’s plush bed. The lighting was dim with the room only being partially illuminated by a single bedside lamp.

The moment Will’s back hit the bed, Hannibal’s hands slid down to then hook his fingers into the waistbands of both his lover’s jeans and undergarments. “Lift your hips,” he instructed while tugging at them.

Will was all too eager to shed the remainder of his clothing and as each subsequent inch of his lover’s smooth, pale flesh was revealed to him, Hannibal found himself hopelessly captivated by Will’s raw beauty. He held no doubt within his mind that Will truly was something to marvel at both inside and outside of the bedroom.

“You are a perfect, delectable thing,” Hannibal’s words came out as a soft whisper against Will’s neck as he leaned down to press a kiss to the sensitive patch of skin that rested just below his ear. Further down, he brushed the pads of his thumbs across Will’s nipples before turning his wrists and giving each one a gentle pinch until they hardened under his touch.

Will gave a pleasured sigh then, his head lolling back against the dark teal comforter and his eyes fluttering shut as he focused on the sensation of it. The foreplay was nice and all, but he wanted–no, he *needed* –to feel something other than a light brush of Hannibal’s fingertips.

“Then you need to communicate those needs with me, Will.”

“H-Hannibal…”

Hannibal's mouth was still on him, trailing a string of kisses down the column of his neck and Will felt as though he would almost certainly go mad if he couldn't find a way to hurry this along. Hannibal had subjected him to plenty of teasing back in his office, so there was no need for him to make Will endure any more of it. His cock was already standing hard and heavy against his abdomen with a clear bead of precum peeking out from the engorged tip.

This was all becoming too much for him and yet, it also wasn't nearly enough–not when Will was yearning to feel the rough slide of lips, tongue, and flesh against his heated skin. He'll admit that Hannibal's methods for freeing him of his inhibitions, if only for brief periods of time, were infuriating but *God* , were they ever effective.

"Hannibal," Will moved to pull Hannibal away from his neck and chest by tangling his fingers into the short, brown locks and giving them a sharp tug backwards. Their eyes met, and Will looked utterly desperate with his pupils blown wide, his kiss-swollen lips parted and panting, and his face flushed a gorgeous shade of crimson. "I feel like I'm going to burst out of my skin if you don't actually start touching me like I want and I swear to–" he cut himself off for a moment longer in order to gather the rest of his thoughts, his eyes screwing shut as he tried to work through his obvious frustration. "Hannibal, please just fuck me already."

Slowly, Will's tight grip on Hannibal's hair loosened enough for the other to rise back up and look over him properly. "I intend to," Hannibal said while momentarily directing his attention over towards his bedside drawer. After grabbing a bottle of personal lubricant from within, he placed it on the bed near Will's hip, then reached up towards his neck and began working the double windsor knot of his tie apart with his fingers. Once that long strip of fabric was pulled away and set aside, his shirt followed suit shortly after. All the while, Will's gaze was transfixed onto Hannibal's body as he moved, taking in every patch of newly uncovered skin as though this was his first time seeing it.

"You're incredible," he said.

Hannibal's internal sense of pride over Will's overt admiration slipped through in the form of a smirk. "I'm careful about what I put into my body."

"And I'm not?"

Briefly, Hannibal recalled the wide assortment of processed foods he'd found in Will's kitchen back in Wolf Trap. There wouldn't be any fun in bringing that up, however. "If you are, then you have impeccable taste."

Will cocked his head off to the side and gave a breathy chuckle. "Is that a reference to yourself, Hannibal?"

"And if it is?"

Grinning, Will readjusted his position in the bed by scooting himself down until his legs were dangling off the edge. "Then I would be inclined to agree with you."

Hannibal swept forward, positioning himself between Will's legs while moving to hook a hand underneath the bend of each knee. It took very little effort for him to hoist Will's legs

back up whilst spreading them apart as far as the other's body would comfortably allow for. "Keep your legs like this for me."

While retrieving the lube, Hannibal looked down between their bodies only to catch sight of Will curling his fingers around the thick base of his neglected cock. Will was shameless in his display as he pumped himself steadily, his fist sliding up and down along his rigid length. In watching Will, Hannibal felt a pulse of heat run down the length of his own cock, causing it to twitch from within its confines. Much like Will, he too felt as though he was going to burst apart at the seams if he didn't relieve some of the strain. Hannibal could have sighed after he undid his fly to his pants and pushed them down along his hips until he felt the cool air of the room against his heated flesh.

He made quick work of coating his fingers with a generous amount of the lube before reaching down between Will's parted thighs and pressing the pads of his index and middle fingers against the exposed rim of his hole. All it took was a gentle push for them to slide past until they were fully seated inside at the last knuckle. At first, Hannibal deliberately avoided Will's prostate while he carefully worked the other man open. For now, he focused on getting him used to the sensation of being penetrated again. It wasn't long, however, before Will began to practically whine for more.

"I'm not delicate, you know?"

Hannibal didn't respond immediately. Instead, he chose to lock eyes with Will, an intense brown meeting a smoldering blue while down below, a third finger slid inside him to join the other two. This time around, he crooked all three upwards to massage Will's prostate through the slick walls of his innards. "I know."

Will let out a shuddering gasp, hips arching up from the bed and into Hannibal's touch. Once those three fingers were sliding in and out with ease, Hannibal withdrew them entirely and didn't allow Will a single moment before replacing them with the full brunt of his cock. He pushed inside of Will with a single, harsh thrust of his hips, drawing out a choked moan from the man writhing beneath him. For Will, it was an aching stretch, but fuck if he was going to ask Hannibal to stop.

"Oh fuck, oh fuck…" Will's breathing was labored and Hannibal relished in the sound. Now, Will's knees were bent up to his chest and he could feel tears prickling at the outer corners of his eyes over the deliciously rough treatment. Now, *this* was more like it. Hannibal was relentless as he pressed forward into the tight, welcoming heat of Will's body with sharp thrusts and all Will could do to brace himself against the force of them was fist his free hand into the sheets until his knuckles turned white. The other continued to grip at his cock, trying so desperately to line up the timing of his strokes with Hannibal's thrusts.

In the midst of it all, Hannibal reached down to cup Will's jaw before leaning over him to capture his lips in a deep and sensual kiss. With how caught up he was in their shared moment of passion, he allowed himself to linger on the delectable taste of Will's tongue for a few seconds longer than he honestly should have, so by the time he finally pulled away, they were both left gasping for air. Will's hand shot up from the bed and clung tightly to Hannibal's bicep as though it was the only thing that could keep him grounded here with him because well, it really was. There was a part of him that wanted to bury his burning face into

Hannibal's neck, but he couldn't. Not when the hold on his jaw wasn't lightening up. Ever since they first became intimate, Hannibal had worked so tirelessly to rid Will of whatever ridiculous sense of 'modesty' he seemed to harbor when it came to the carnal delights they enjoyed together. He wanted to watch Will's pleasure unfold before him.

"I'm so close. I just need–" Will couldn't have formed a complete sentence if he wanted to. "Please, right there–!" He could feel a familiar rise of heat and tension working its way up through the core of his body like a tightly wound coil, pushing him closer and closer to the edge of release. "H-Hannibal!"

Hearing the sheer desperation in Will's voice, Hannibal adjusted the angle of his thrusts so that each time his cock slid back inside of him, the rounded head would strike his prostate. He finally let go of Will's jaw and reached down between their flush bodies to grab his hips with both hands. "Go on, my darling boy."

The blinding mix of sensations was too much for Will to withstand any longer. With a loud cry, he arched his back off the bed and came apart in Hannibal's arms, his cock twitching in his hand as thick ropes of cum spilled out onto his stomach. He felt like his mind was floating on an endless sea of bliss as powerful jolts of pleasure rushed through every fiber of his being and consumed him in its entirety. Somewhere amongst it all, he became vaguely aware of a few more erratic thrusts slamming into his body, then a rhythmic pulsing from deep within as Hannibal's cock spilled its release inside him.

In the moments that followed, Hannibal pulled out of Will, his breathing ragged and his hair having fallen across his forehead. Below him, Will lied there, sprawled out on the bed in sated exhaustion. He didn't have a single care for how he looked, only how he felt and as it stood, words were beyond him.

Hannibal leaned back down long enough to press a tender kiss to Will's jaw, then raised himself back up. "Wait here, Will. I won't be long." He padded across the floor and into the en suite bathroom where he turned on the faucet for hot water. While he waited for it to warm up, he grabbed a washcloth out of a nearby cabinet and placed it over the rim of the basin. From there, he retrieved his personal body wash from its place on a small shelf in the shower, deciding that if he was going to use any soap for Will, it wouldn't be the harsh, antibacterial variety that sat next to his sink. Once the washcloth was lathered up and wrung out until it was no longer drenched and dripping, Hannibal exited the bathroom and returned to the bedside where he found Will patiently waiting for him with warm contentment all across his face. He held the washcloth out for him to take

"My apologies for the mess," Hannibal said. "If you would prefer, I could draw you a bath or prepare the shower for you."

"That depends," Will extended an arm to lazily grab the offered washcloth. "Would you be joining me there?"

"Would you like for me to?"

"If you don't, I will be sorely disappointed."

Chapter End Notes

I will try to have the next chapter out in a more reasonable time frame. The next chapter will feature more drama™ and more of the other characters tagged in this story.

Fatal Attraction

In the aftermath of his undercover visit to Dr.Lecter's home, Franklyn couldn't get anything resembling a good night's rest. The residual adrenaline he felt was still lingering about in his body, causing him to feel unusually alert and on edge, even as the evening hours had rolled well into the night. In lieu of sleep, he settled himself in at his desk with his laptop propped open and his camera connected via one of the several USB ports that ran along its side. Beside him, a single desk lamp was flicked on, illuminating a clipped newspaper article that featured a full-color photograph of Dr.Lecter giving a standing ovation amongst an equally enthusiastic audience at one of the opera house's most recent performances. Franklyn had, of course, been in attendance as well. There were very few instances in which he would willingly pass up an opportunity to place himself within Dr.Lecter's sphere, and reserving a seat, although tricky, had been made possible by having Tobias figuratively tug a few strings for him. The memory of the opera passed through Franklyn's mind in little snapshots, and it was only then that he realized that he could hardly remember anything about the music itself.

Hunched over the desk, Franklyn spent the next hour poring over the photographs he'd taken earlier on in the evening. One-by-one, he clicked through his image gallery and inspected the contents of each photo, scrutinizing every minor detail with rapt attention and a narrowed gaze. By this point, the glaring brightness of his computer screen against his dimly lit bedroom was beginning to take an uncomfortable toll on his straining eyes, but he couldn't possibly tear them away from his pictures. There were one-hundred and twenty-nine to be exact, but out of all of them, only a small handful truly stood out against the rest. Of course, those were the ones that had miraculously captured Dr.Lecter locked in a rather passionate kiss with a younger man, who Franklyn could only assume was one of his patients. The knowledge of it still stung, but Franklyn chose not to dwell on that particular feeling.

From that fateful moment onward, a hundred different questions have since flashed through Franklyn's mind and the most infuriating part of it all was that he didn't have an answer for a single one of them. Who was that man? When did he meet Dr.Lecter? Was this merely a casual affair or was there a deeper, more heartfelt sentiment behind their relationship? Why, out of all the fascinating faces that regularly crossed his path, had Dr.Lecter chosen him specifically? The longer Franklyn stared at the damning images on his screen, the more his frustration simmered until it nearly reached its boiling point. With a loud huff, Franklyn quickly minimized the tab containing them and switched over to his browser for a bit of research.

As he began scouring the web for any pieces of useful information that may aid his efforts in uncovering the identity of this unknown, dark-haired man, Franklyn tried to think back on what he already knew about the ever-intriguing Hannibal Lecter. He was born in Lithuania and after immigrating to the United States, he worked tirelessly to become a physician and now, a psychiatrist. Dr.Lecter was a sophisticated man of taste who held a distinct passion for art, literature, music, and cheese. He undoubtedly enjoyed the finer things in life, which apparently included sleeping with his patients. Granted, Franklyn didn't know this to be true with absolute certainty, but even he had seen the fiery sparks of passion flying between the

two men in that searing lip-lock. He felt that it was more than reasonable for him to assume that their relationship was, at least in part, sexual in nature.

On every website Franklyn visited, the overwhelming majority of the information regarding Dr.Lecter included things that he already knew and much to his dismay, didn't bring him any closer to achieving his goal. A heavy, heaving sigh left him while he clicked onto the next page, fully expecting to find nothing of substance within it. At this rate, he would almost be better off trying his luck at running the license plate number he had scribbled down from the back of that station wagon.

Franklyn was halfway to legitimately considering it when he stumbled upon something of interest–a tabloid article from a website called ' *TattleCrime* '. When the page finally loaded and an image of Dr.Lecter standing beside a shockingly familiar face appeared off to the side, Franklyn's gaze went wide. His eager eyes couldn't scan the lines of inflammatory text fast enough as he frantically searched for a name to put to that face. He couldn't have cared less who the 'Minnesota Shrike' was or the significance of his crimes until he took in the name of the man who had ultimately claimed the now deceased killer's life; Will Graham.

So, this 'Will Graham' was the other man standing beside Dr.Lecter in the article's featured photo? A so-called 'psychopath' who profiled some of the country's most depraved killers was beguiling enough to have captured Dr.Lecter's heart?

Franklyn didn't know whether he wanted to cry or laugh over the absurdity of it all.

Well, at least now, he knew why Will Graham had originally sought out Dr.Lecter's services. From the way the article's author spoke of him, he sounded as though he was in dire need of a skilled psychiatrist. Who could have possibly predicted that in the wake of such brutal events, that Dr.Lecter would discover a mind worth cherishing? Was that it? Only Baltimore's most disturbed minds were privileged enough to peel back the layers of Dr.Lecter's finely tailored person suit to discover the man that lies beneath it all?

Having made up his mind, Franklyn visited TattleCrime's 'Contact' page and was quickly able to locate a corresponding email address for the article's author, a Miss Freddie Lounds. As his fingers tapped away at his keyboard, he reminded himself that he simply couldn't sit by and allow Dr.Lecter's hypocrisy to go unpunished, not when he was sleeping with patients like this.

to: freddie.lounds@tattlecrime.com

from: Froideveaux1978@hmail.com

subject: An Offer

Dear Ms.Lounds,

I came across your article on the Minnesota Shrike and was delighted to have found it. It was very eye-opening for me. You see, I am a patient of Dr. Hannibal Lecter's and lately, I have been trying to find out more about who Will Graham is. I did not know much about him

previously, but I have since come to learn that he is actually quite close with Dr.Lecter. In fact, they are much closer than most people would assume.

I know that this is probably going to make me sound crazy, and believe me when I say that I was floored myself when I found out, but I ask that you please give me a few moments of your time. Before I begin, I want to make it known that the claims I'm about to make are not unfounded in the slightest and I would not be contacting you in the first place unless I had the proof to back them up. With that being said, I know for a fact that Will Graham and Dr.Lecter have a relationship that is either romantic or sexual in nature, likely both.

If you are interested in learning more about my recent discovery, please let me know and we can arrange a time and a location to meet so that we can discuss this matter in greater detail. I will be eagerly awaiting your response.

-F

After hitting send, Franklyn slowly leaned back in his chair, a few aching 'pops' sounding from his stretched spine as he did so, and with his eyes still fixed to the screen, he idly skimmed over the rows of unread subject lines that filled his inbox. It didn't take very long at all before he began to lose interest and his mind inevitably wandered off, taking multiple detours down random trains of thought before ultimately returning to his previous musings about Will Graham and the type of person he must be. It was all too easy for him to lose track of time like this, but a familiar notification chime sounding through his laptop's speakers worked wonders to redirect his attention to the present moment. In an instant, Franklyn had snapped back to reality and was looking back towards the top row of his inbox to find that he had an unread response from Freddie Lounds waiting for him.

Impressed by the swiftness of her response, Franklyn clicked to open it.

to: Froideveaux1978@hmail.com

from: freddie.lounds@tattlecrime.com

subject: Re: An Offer

Dear F,

If your claims hold any air of truth to them, I would be very interested in learning more about your findings. I'm assuming, since Dr.Hannibal Lecter's practice is located in Baltimore, that you are local to the city? If you are available, I will be able to meet with you any time tomorrow. Would coffee work? If so, please respond to my email with a time and location and I will be sure to meet you there. Alternatively, you may contact me on my work cell. The number is (xxx) xxx-xxxx. If this won't work for you, then we can always plan for another day. There is a picture of me on TattleCrime's 'About' page so that you'll know who to keep an eye out for when we do meet. I am looking forward to making your acquaintance.

Sincerely,

Freddie Lounds

By all accounts, the day was like any other. Jack strolled in through the front doors of the academy just as he had on countless other mornings since his career in the FBI had first begun. His coat was pulled snugly around his body and he greeted a host of familiar faces with all the usual pleasantries as he passed them by. The caffeine from his first coffee of the day was already working its way into his bloodstream, but before his work day could truly begin, he turned to take a quick detour and grabbed a second cup from the overworked pot in the break room.

After helping himself to a generous pour, Jack turned and stepped back out into the hall where he soon walked past two students. One of them, a bright young woman whose fierce determination and steadfast attitude reminded Jack of Miriam, was holding a tablet in her hands.

“Hey! Have you seen this yet? A new article went up on TattleCrime last night about Professor Graham.”

The moment Jack heard Will’s name mentioned in the same sentence as TattleCrime, he stopped dead in his tracks and lingered at the end of the hall.

“Uh, no. Why? Was it something interesting?” A masculine voice asked in turn.

“Dude, Professor Graham is fucking his psychiatrist. That Hannibal Lecter guy? There’s pictures and everything.”

In response to hearing such a startling claim, Jack’s eyebrows practically shot up to his hairline and in an instant, he had turned on his heels and was rapidly stalking back down the hall to approach both students, each of whom fell silent the moment he entered their line of sight. Without breathing so much as a single word, Jack reached out to snatch the young woman’s tablet right out of her hands. He ignored her protests while bringing the device up to glance through the dreaded article on its screen. As he hurriedly scrolled back up to the top of the page, he couldn’t help but fear for the worst–that explicit images of his top profiler shacking up with his psychiatrist had somehow found their way onto the everlasting archive that was the internet by courtesy of none other than the ethically dubious Freddie Lounds herself. While that particular description turned out to be a bit of an exaggeration, and thank *fucking* god it was, the photographs that he did end up stumbling across were no less incriminating.

“Oh, what the–” Jack’s mouth hung open and his brows furrowed together tightly as he was overcome with a dizzying whirlwind of emotions, the most prominent of which being shock. A long moment passed, then another before his mind finally regained some semblance of coherent thought. He returned the student’s tablet by hastily shoving the offending device back into her arms, then turned to make his departure. “Neither of you are to discuss this article while on campus. Do I make myself clear?” His voice was firm, leaving no room for any sort of argument or further discussion on the matter.

Jack didn’t wait around to see either of their affirmative nods, the urgency of the situation now taking priority over anything else. He practically rushed towards his next destination; the lecture hall. There, he found Will sitting behind his desk with a red pen in hand and two

stacks of papers resting in front of him, one for ungraded assignments on the left and a growing pile of graded assignments on the right.

“Will,” Jack called out from where he stood, hovering in the doorway. “I need you in my office.”

Without glancing up from a particularly sorry excuse for a criminal analysis, Will responded. “I’ll be there in a bit. I have to finish grading these papers before my class starts.”

“No, Will. You need to come now. This can’t wait.”

“Could you at least give me an idea as to what this pertains to? Is it the Ripper?” Will’s voice sounded wholly disinterested.

“Just get in my office. Now! I’m not going to ask you again!”

Sighing, Will allowed his pen to fall from his fingers, the item landing on his desktop with a light tap as cheap plastic met hardwood. Finally, he obliged Jack by swiveling around and standing up before moving to follow him across the building. Both men passed through the sleek, glass door that led into Jack’s office and with a low huff, Will lowered himself into one of the chairs that rested in front of his superior’s desk. Across from him, Jack took his own seat before moving to rest his wrists at the base of his laptop’s keyboard, fingers tapping quickly across an alarmingly simple sequence of letters and numbers to enter his password.

Once his computer was unlocked, Jack reached for his phone while his free hand moved to flip through the cards of his Rolodex under the tab labeled “L”. When he found the number he was searching for, he punched it into the phone’s keypad. It rang once, then twice, and on the third ring, a muffled voice picked up on the other end.

“Dr.Lecter? Yes, hello. It’s Agent Crawford with the FBI. I’m not interrupting anything, am I?”

At that, Will raised an eyebrow. Why would Jack be calling Hannibal?

“If you’re available, I’d like to ask that you come down to my office. My apologies for asking this of you on such short notice, but a rather sensitive matter regarding Will Graham and yourself has just recently been brought to my attention and given the…nature of it, I must say that it would be much better for us to have this conversation in person.”

Will leaned forward slowly, confusion and a little irritation registering on his face. He continued to listen.

“As soon as you can, if I’m being perfectly honest. I already have Will here with me, so if you could join us, then that would be even better,” There was a brief pause where Jack fell silent while he listened to Hannibal‘s response. “Thank you. I’ll see you when you get here.”

“Are you going to fill me in on what’s going on?”

After placing the phone back onto its receiver with a bit more force than necessary, Jack finally turned his attention back to Will. “Will, have you been on TattleCrime recently?”

Will fought the urge to roll his eyes. “No. I try not to make a habit out of reading the sensationalized bullshit that Freddie likes to write about me or the cases we work on.”

“Well, you should because an article went up on Sunday about you and Dr.Lecter and it sure as hell isn’t about a case,” Jack revealed, his knowing gaze flicking back to his laptop. “Tell me, what exactly is the nature of your relationship with him?”

All of a sudden, Will’s face paled, as though some part of his being had suddenly evaporated into thin air. He drew in a sharp breath and sheepishly averted his gaze from Jack’s scrutinizing one. This absolutely could *not* be happening right now.

He screwed his eyes shut and frantically searched his mind for a careful string of words that wouldn’t cause him to feel completely flayed open in front of Jack. “Hannibal…” Shit, there he goes using his first name again. “I’m sorry. Can I ask how this conversation is relevant to my job here?”

“It’s relevant because an article went up on TattleCrime about how you were, and I quote, ‘caught seducing your psychiatrist’,” Jack made finger movements to suggest quotation marks. “and Freddie also somehow got her hands on two pictures of you kissing Dr.Lecter outside his front door.”

To call Will stunned would have been an understatement.

“Look for yourself,” Jack added while turning his laptop around so that the screen was now facing Will.

Reluctantly, Will began reading.

FATAL ATTRACTION: Will Graham Caught Seducing His Psychiatrist

It would seem that Will Graham’s disturbed mind isn’t the only thing that Dr.Hannibal Lecter wants to get inside of.

New TattleCrime exclusive photos reveal a salacious entanglement between the FBI ‘Special Agent’ and renowned psychiatrist, Dr.Hannibal Lecter, right outside of his Baltimore home. But how did a one-time psychological evaluation turn into such an intimate and careless breach of both ethics and bodies?

Even though the Minnesota Shrike case has ended, Dr.Lecter continues to consult on cases alongside his patient and apparent lover, Will Graham, leaving us all to wonder when this scandalous relationship began. Who made the first move? Was this the result of a passionate one night stand, a drunken mistake, or something more? Has Will Graham been actively trying to seduce his psychiatrist or does Dr.Lecter simply become weak-willed in the face of his psychopathic ‘charm’?

Friday evening, a TattleCrime informant spotted Dr.Lecter’s car, a grossly luxurious Bentley Arnage, arriving at his home right alongside a Volvo station wagon, driven by Will Graham. After reaching the front door, Will Graham pulled his psychiatrist into a passionate embrace,

complete with a searing kiss and eager hands that sought to ensnare Dr.Lecter in a scandal that any so-called 'professional' would never wish to be caught up in.

It has become abundantly clear that Dr.Lecter has a soft spot for unstable minds, and Will Graham is as unstable as they come. Perhaps it is this instability that provides an explanation as to why these voracious lovers decided to indulge their seemingly insatiable appetite for each other's flesh in such a risky location. Both men are well past their hormone-riddled teenage years, so we can only assume that the unorthodox nature of their relationship has ignited something particularly fervent within them.

Whether it's an affinity for power dynamics or a blatant disregard for doctor-patient ethics, we know one thing for certain and it's that Dr.Lecter's days as a respected psychiatrist in the city of Baltimore are numbered. It also appears that the FBI needs to start exercising more caution when selecting their 'Special Agents'. How can the FBI expect to catch the Chesapeake Ripper when their criminal profiler is too busy having his body analyzed more than his mind?

Will's heart had sunk deep down into the pit of his stomach from the moment he'd read the sensationalized title of Freddie's article. An overwhelming wave of nausea crashed over him upon realizing that his private life had been forcibly plastered across the front page of a tasteless tabloid and was only made worse by the addition of two photographs, both of which were equally damning in their own right.

The first photo–situated to the left of the article's body of text–had captured the exact moment where Will had tugged Hannibal down into that passionate kiss right outside of his front door. The two heads locking lips were unmistakably theirs and the sight of it alone was making Will's head spin, his mind racing to figure out just how the *fuck* Freddie, or this 'informant' who was reportedly working on her behalf, had managed to get close enough to either one of them to take such a clear image in the first place without either Hannibal or himself noticing.

The second photo sat directly underneath the first and although it was a bit racier than the last, it wasn't outright explicit. Will could already feel a deep-seated sense of guilt gnawing at his gut for allowing himself to become so foolishly caught up in the moment, like the hormonal teenager Freddie had compared him to in her article. He and Hannibal were still kissing in the second photo, but the clever angle of the camera had allowed her, or the nameless 'informant' Will suspected she was hiding behind, to capture what had been happening between their bodies. Will could see, with an alarming amount of clarity, his fingers dipping below the waistband of Hannibal's pants.

This was bad.

No, this was catastrophic and Will would only have himself to blame for the inevitable fallout that this salacious article was going to cause, not only for himself, but for Hannibal and the FBI as well.

Will was at a complete loss for words for what felt like an eternity as he tried and repeatedly failed to collect his racing thoughts. His face was burning brightly with embarrassment, a deep crimson now staining his usually pale cheeks, and he suddenly found that he could no

longer meet Jack's eyes. This was utterly humiliating. Hell, if the Ripper himself wanted to snatch him up out of this room and string his vital organs across the nearest forest, he may just consider letting him.

"Will?"

Hannibal's voice managed to break through the defensive trance that Will wasn't even fully aware he had put himself into. He turned his head sharply and out of the corner of his eye, spotted Hannibal making his way into Jack's office.

"Ah, Dr.Lecter. There you are. Please, come in and take a seat," Jack said, his voice unwavering as he motioned for the other man to sit in the empty chair beside Will. "Have you read the latest TattleCrime article?"

"I presume you're referring to the defamatory article that Ms.Lounds wrote about Will and myself," Hannibal answered, his outward expression betraying the slightest amount of tension yet still remaining largely unreadable. "If that is the case, then yes. I've been made aware of its publication."

"Look, I already know that I don't have to ask whether or not her claims are true. She took pictures of you two for fuck's sake," Jack continued, his anger having now become evident in his newly elevated tone of voice. "What I need to know now is what the hell either of you are thinking because clearly, someone here isn't using their head. At least, not the one that matters anyways," he gave each man a pointed look before continuing. "Do you even understand the implications that come along with something like this?"

Hannibal's uncanny ability to maintain his composure no matter what difficulties he may be facing in the present moment never failed to impress Will, who was still in no better of a position to speak on his lover's behalf or his own. Had the Ripper swung by to steal his tongue without him noticing? That's how he felt anyway.

"Jack, I believe that you and I are going to hold a difference of opinion on this matter," Hannibal began. "The only ethical implications that I can see being of slight concern here are only the ones relating to Will's work. Will consults with me on the cases you've asked for his assistance with, but even so, we are not formally considered to be colleagues. Unlike him, I am not employed by the FBI and furthermore, Will is not my patient."

"Not your patient? What do you mean Will isn't your patient? He gets therapy from you," Jack argued, his brow furrowing further in frustration.

"We merely have conversations," Hannibal said smoothly. "I do not charge Will for the time we spend together and I would have never allowed our relationship to breach beyond a professional level if he truly were my patient."

"Fucking hell…" Jack muttered out another curse while leaning forward to bury his face into the palms of his hands. He'd learned years ago that it was better for him (and his blood pressure) to pick and choose his battles, and it didn't take long for him to realize that this particular battle wasn't worth fighting. "Fine. Fine," he relented. "You're right. Whatever Will is to you doesn't really matter, but that still doesn't change the fact that you two were

careless enough to land yourselves on the front page of TattleCrime and this time, it wasn't even in relation to a case."

For the first time since this whole mess began, Will finally found his voice. "I…I thought she was supposed to stop writing about me."

"You're right," Jack agreed. "She was. I'll admit that this is bold, even for a woman like her. Real bold. It must be a slow day at the office if this is what Freddie is choosing to write about."

Will spent a long moment searching his befuddled mind for the right words to use before speaking again, his vowels and consonants flowing more easily this time around. "So, where do we go from here? What is our recourse for this? I mean, something like this…it can't be legal, can it?"

Jack considered Will's question carefully, a low hum leaving his throat as he mulled it over. "If what Hannibal told me is true in that you really are not his patient, then Freddie's article is more or less libel against the both of you, but don't take my word for it. I'm not a lawyer here. If you wanted to pursue legal action against her, then you would obviously need to consult with one on the matter."

Will nodded slowly, then followed up with a few more questions. "And what about me? Do I still have a job? Am I going to be suspended over this?"

"It's hard for me to say right now," Jack answered, a heavy sigh leaving him then. "I would like to say that whatever you and Hannibal do outside of the field isn't anyone's business but your own, but Freddie took it upon herself to make it everyone's business anyways. I'm not saying that what she did wasn't wrong. It most definitely was, but you two also need to start being a little more careful if you're going to be doing any more of this," he pointed back down towards the racy images on his computer screen.

"So, is that a no?" Will asked, adopting a hopeful expression.

"A very reluctant one," Jack confirmed. "So watch yourself. Until this whole mess gets resolved, I need to ask that you don't talk about it during your classes, even if someone tries bringing it up to you."

Will nodded once more. "Understood."

"If it helps, I could see about getting Alana to cover for you over the next few days," Jack offered. "I imagine that you and Hannibal will need that time to contact a lawyer anyhow and I *strongly* suggest you do."

Will slid into the passenger side of Hannibal's Bentley wordlessly. Tension pervaded the air between them, though by this point in their relationship, Will had become attuned enough to Hannibal's subtler mannerisms to know that the older man's perceived displeasure wasn't directed towards him. At least, not in its entirety or perhaps, Will hoped, not at all.

Despite the gravity of the situation weighing on his mind, Hannibal maintained his composure with practiced ease and carefully shut the passenger side door. Following the conversation that had taken place in Jack's office, Hannibal had insisted on driving Will to his practice himself, the protective urge to ease his beautiful empath's undeserved burdens surging through his chest with renewed vigor. He hadn't intended on displaying Will to the world as his until the time was right, and having been robbed of that opportunity– the privilege that should have been his alone–caused Hannibal to briefly entertain thoughts of the numerous ways in which a lithe woman like Freddie Lounds could be elevated into something that could actually be considered useful, like nourishment for the man she seemed to be so keen on harassing.

The car started almost soundlessly and for the first few minutes after buckling themselves in, both men sat there in contemplative silence. A hundred unspoken questions hung between them and yet, not a single one made it past either man's lips. Hannibal, as usual, appeared thoughtful if not somewhat irked by the inconveniences this tedious incident was undoubtedly going to cause for him, especially amongst his social circles. He could already hear the swarm of hushed whispers surrounding him, but Hannibal, if anything, was wholly unabashed by his feelings for the only man who held the capacity to be his equal, to *become* .

"How are you feeling, mylimasis?" Hannibal opted to use his preferred term of endearment in breaking the silence.

Will glanced up from beneath his lashes, barely daring to meet Hannibal's eyes. "I…I'm feeling a lot of things right now."

Hannibal grasped the gear shift and pulled it downwards. "Then let us break it down and examine each feeling. Which one is most prominent to you?"

Will felt far too flustered to even make an attempt at arguing against this impromptu therapy session. "Irritation," he answered simply.

"What else?"

Will wanted to grumble and curl his body up against the door frame, which would have been a more outward, albeit childish, expression of his frustration, so instead, he settled for a sigh. "Confusion. I want to know how Freddie managed to get those pictures of us."

Hannibal hummed in affirmation while turning out onto the main road. "As would I, mylimasis. What else are you feeling?"

"I…" Will began before trailing off, unsure of himself. He shifted uncomfortably in his seat, the word 'guilty' resting just on the tip of his tongue.

Hannibal removed his right hand from the steering wheel and reached across the center console to cover Will's closed fist, his fingers gently curling over near-white knuckles. "You need to only ever be honest with me."

“I feel guilty,” Will finally spat out. “I’m the one who decided to kiss you out in the open like that and just my fucking luck, the one time I do it, Freddie was lying in wait somewhere with her camera ready to go. If I would have just waited for you to–”

“Will,” Hannibal put a decisive stop to the self-deprecating rant the other man was surely about to go on. “There is no need for you to place the blame upon yourself. You are not at fault for the circumstances we’re facing.”

Will shook his head, almost desperate to argue otherwise. “No, no. Hannibal, I got impatient and–”

“Will,” Hannibal cut in once more, his hand now gripping Will’s more tightly. “You should never berate yourself for showing your affection towards me.”

“But–”

“Miss Lounds was terribly rude in her actions and her article is not an accurate representation of our relationship. There are many things I can tolerate Will, but I will not allow your feelings to be misguided.”

“Maybe so, but that still doesn’t change the fact that I should have been more careful,” Will asserted, unwilling to accept defeat just yet.

“Miss Lounds should have been less opportunistic,” Hannibal countered, his voice taking on a more stern tone. “Her ability to gain such proximity to us without either you or myself noticing is concerning. We did not linger outside of my home for any extended period of time, which suggests that she was likely on or near my property by the time of our arrival.”

“Do you think that she followed us?” Will wondered aloud.

“It’s a possibility,” Hannibal agreed. “Though, I do not recall seeing her car that night.”

“Well, to be fair, you weren’t exactly on your A-game that night,” Will replied sheepishly. “Neither of us were.”

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully. “Not in the way that we needed to be, evidently.”

“She wrote in her article that an informant saw us,” Will continued. “I’m not inclined to believe anything she writes on TattleCrime. It’s all sensationalized bullshit anyways, but we can’t rule anything out just yet. Though, if that really were the case, then…”

“Then perhaps we should err on the side of caution,” Hannibal filled in.

“Yes, exactly,” Will agreed. “It’s already been established that Freddie has it out for me. There’s no question there, but whoever followed us, if this ‘informant’ truly is someone else entirely, then their sights were more likely set on you.”

“Expand upon that thought process for me, Will.”

“Well, our night started at your office, and if we’re making the assumption that Freddie’s claims are true in that she really did receive those photos from an informant–someone aside from herself–then there’s a very strong possibility that this informant was already parked and waiting, whether that be outside of your home or at your office. They could have followed us or they could have already been lying in wait, but the main point that I’m trying to make here is that regardless of where the informant started, both locations are associated more with you than they are with me. The fact that I even got roped into this at all could have been a matter of circumstance.”

Hannibal inclined his head towards Will while giving his words a few moment’s worth of silent consideration. It was a compelling argument, no doubt. “Are you suggesting that I am the primary target in this situation?”

“I suspect it, yes. If someone was looking for me specifically, why would they choose to wait outside your house? Our relationship isn’t public, or…” Will faltered for a split second before correcting himself. “Well, I guess it wasn’t until just recently. “The point being that we haven’t told anyone about us, so where exactly am I fitting into this whole scenario if I’m supposedly more than just collateral damage? Logically, it makes more sense if we view it as an attack directed towards you.”

If Hannibal felt troubled by Will’s theory to any extent, he didn’t show it. Upon arriving at his practice, Hannibal parked his Bentley in its usual spot, then turned to climb out. Dark eyes scanned his immediate surroundings while he rounded the hood, watching for signs of anything that could be interpreted as being out of place. His hand hovered on the handle to the passenger side door for a bit longer than necessary while his gaze swept through the area a second time around. Inside the Bentley, Will peered up at Hannibal through the window and shot him a curious look. “Hannibal?” He called from within, his voice muffled by the thick pane of glass separating them.

In an instant, Hannibal had redirected his attention back to the task at hand, seemingly satisfied by his findings, or a lack thereof. “Come, mylimasis,” he said while opening the door for Will. “Would you like a drink?”

“Would you judge me if I said yes?” Will asked, knowing full well that drinking during the ante meridiem hours was a commonly frowned upon practice.

“Only if you spare me from your judgment for joining you,” Hannibal answered while moving to guide Will up the steps, his hand resting over the small of the younger man’s back. His slight joke earned him a laugh in turn.

“Maybe I can forgive your day drinking if I see a few fingers’ worth of scotch in my hand within the next five minutes.”

Will had been hoping that Hannibal’s scotch would ease his ruffled nerves.

It did not.

They had spent the better part of an hour discussing their predicament at length, speculating on who the photographer could be and what their motivation could have been for stalking Hannibal in the first place. Although they could not yet rule out Freddie Lounds entirely, she did not sit at the top of their list of potential suspects, which as it stood, was much shorter than either man would have preferred and frustratingly so. Freddie's determination to label Will as an unstable psychopath was just as persistent as it had ever been, even in an exposé that was not geared primarily towards him, which led Will to believe that it was only his involvement in Hannibal's life that incentivized her to write it. He suspected that someone, almost certainly their mysterious photographer, approached Freddie with promises of a scandal in the making, though how the photographer knew to contact Freddie in regards to their findings was yet another unknown to pile on top of the many others.

Throughout the entirety of their conversation, Will couldn't stay still. He paced all around Hannibal's office, inspecting random knick-knacks, flipping through books he had no intention of ever reading himself, and at one point, even climbing the ladder that led to more books he held no interest in. Hannibal, meanwhile, remained perfectly poised in his seat with his legs crossed and a glass of wine resting elegantly in his hand. It was only when they found a natural resting point, a comfortable break from the endless conjecture, that Hannibal momentarily excused himself to make a phone call. He didn't leave the room in order to do so, but in the absence of Hannibal's undivided attention, Will's general feeling of unrest festered into an unshakeable sense of trepidation.

Freddie's article was actively forcing him to confront the previously unspoken aspects of his relationship with Hannibal–to place defining labels upon something that had simply just been. The ethical and social implications of their relationship, whatever it was formally considered to be, held more potential consequences for Hannibal than for himself, and Will feared that this incident marked the beginning of the end for them. He would understand, of course, if Hannibal wished to protect himself and to preserve what remained of his reputation by putting an admittedly wise end to things as they were, but the sting of it would hurt no less. The mere thought of losing Hannibal in any capacity caused Will's heart to give a sorrowful wrench from deep within his chest and finally, for the first time since setting foot inside of his lover's office, he had to sit down and collect himself.

Somewhere in the background, he heard the soft click of a phone being hung back onto its receiver and a light shuffling across hardwood before Hannibal appeared at his side, a comforting hand coming to a rest over his shoulder. "Something is on your mind, mylimasis," Hannibal observed. "May I know what it is?"

Will involuntarily stiffened beneath his touch, causing a look of concern to cross the older man's face. He didn't want to allow himself to seek comfort in Hannibal's presence if it was ultimately going to be a finite thing for him. "I…" Will screwed his eyes shut while lifting his crystal glass of scotch up to his lips for another sip to help steel his nerves. "I want to know what all of this means for you–for us," he said, his voice sounding a little strained. "Not just in regards to the article, but in general."

At that, Hannibal softened his expression and regarded Will with a look of sincerity that he reserved only for him. Slowly, he lowered himself onto the chaise lounge to sit beside his beautiful empath, his grip on Will's shoulder tightening into a reassuring squeeze. "The

article that Ms.Lounds wrote holds no bearing over how I will choose to proceed with our relationship, and I do wish to proceed."

The tension in Will's body eased ever so slightly, though he still kept himself guarded. "Shouldn't you be worried?"

"What exactly should I be worried about, Will?"

"Freddie wrote that I'm your patient, Hannibal," Will recalled. "While that technically isn't true, we also have to bear in mind that the truth isn't common knowledge here. What if the licensing board wants to investigate you over this?"

"I do not keep any formal records of our meetings, Will," Hannibal reassured. "My license to practice psychiatry is not going to be put at risk over the connections I choose to make outside of my career."

"Maybe so, but what about your actual patients? Your colleagues? What are they going to think about all this?"

"Their opinions also hold no bearing over my personal life. I cannot curb the gossip that is inevitably going to arise from this incident, but I can correct their assumptions."

Will tilted his head. "Their assumptions?"

"The article implies that you are a secret that I intended to keep indefinitely. You are not a casual affair to me, mylimasis. You never were." Hannibal certainly had a way of melting Will's edges. When coupled with an excellent scotch, Will's fears melted away right along with them.

"Am I your partner then?" Will asked tentatively.

Hannibal afforded the younger man one of his rare, genuine smiles. "If you'll allow me the honor, then yes. I would like for you to be my partner in an official capacity."

Hearing the words being spoken aloud made Will's heart soar and his happiness was reflected in the bright grin that graced his face in that moment. "Absolutely, I would. Are you certain that you want this?"

"I have seldom felt more certain over anything else in my life," Hannibal reaffirmed, sounding entirely too pleased with himself for Will's liking. "If you accept, then I would like to make a request of you."

Will quirked a brow, curiosity brimming. "And what would that be?"

"Accompany me to the next opera and allow me to show you how little shame I feel over having you as my partner. It's taking place next Friday."

Will hesitated then, multiple arguments against Hannibal's request whirring through his mind all at once. Deep down inside, he knew that Hannibal would be more than capable of making

a sound counterargument for each one, multiple even, but that still didn't stop him from trying. "I don't exactly do well in social settings, Hannibal."

Without missing a beat, Hannibal responded. "Then it is fortunate for you that I do. You would not need to engage in any conversations you do not feel comfortable with."

"Even so, I don't have anything appropriate to wear."

"Then we will have something made."

"On such short notice?"

"I suspect that my tailor would be willing to make an exception at my request."

"There's nothing I can say to convince you that I shouldn't go, is there?"

"If those are your true wishes, then I will respect them, mylimasis. I would only ever want you to attend on your own volition. If there are any measures that I can take to ease any of the more unpleasant aspects of attending a social event for you, then all you need to do is ask."

Will sighed, accepting his defeat. "You already bought the tickets, didn't you?"

Hannibal smiled, appreciative of Will's surrender. "Indeed, I did."

Compromise

Chapter Notes

> When I set out to write this chapter, I'll admit that I was a little too ambitious. The more I worked on it, the longer it ended up becoming, so I decided to split it up into two chapters, but fear not. I did promise opera sex and that will be going up. There will be one more chapter after the next one goes up and that will conclude this fic. If anyone's interested, I also recently uploaded the first chapter of the fic I will be working on after this one is finished up. It is called Graham Cam and it's another Hannigram fic. :)

The following morning, Will returned to Quantico.

From the moment reality had reclaimed him for the day, his mind wandered over his hopes and fears. He decidedly ignored both Jack's and Hannibal's insistence that he, at the very least, take a single day of reprieve in wake of yesterday's events. At first, he attempted to adopt a more nonchalant attitude towards his predicament, but that approach soon proved itself to be just as useless as the entirety of TattleCrime. Simply ignoring the article's existence wouldn't lessen the impact it was going to have—has likely already had—on his professional life and while Will was fairly confident in his ability to ignore gossip from his students, his colleagues were another matter entirely. Beverly, Brian, and Jimmy had barely allowed him enough time to wrap up his morning lecture before they started pushing their way through the crowd of students filing out of the room.

"Are you okay? I know it's a stupid question considering what happened, but are you okay?" Beverly's voice held a sincere air of concern to it as she spoke to Will. Beside her, both Brian and Jimmy joined her in practically crowding around Will's desk, the three of them eager for the chance to hear Will's input on the juicy article that, by this point, had already made its rounds throughout the Behavioral Science Unit, much to Jack's dismay. Will's empathy allowed him to determine that their expressed commiseration for his misfortune was genuine, but at the same time, so was their desire to probe into his personal life. None of them, however, were concealing any ulterior motives, so Will indulged them. He technically wasn't permitted to, but Jack was nowhere to be seen and Hannibal, the prudent man that he was, had already taken the initiative to schedule the soonest available consult with a lawyer. Regardless of what he chose to reveal here in this room, the outcome would remain the same.

"Yeah, I'm alright," Will replied, sounding mildly despondent. "I'm still trying to figure everything out, but for now, I suppose I'm as okay as I can be."

Beverly nodded, her tense expression softening a fraction. "Well, if you ever need to talk, you know we're always here. How did Freddie even get those pictures of you anyways? Has she resorted to following you around like some stalker or something?"

Will shrugged. “I honestly don’t think she was the one who took the pictures.”

“No?”

“No, I don’t,” Will reaffirmed. “It just…it doesn’t make any sense. If Freddie had her sights set on me, why would she have gone looking for me at Hannibal’s house? She wouldn’t have had any reason to believe that I’d be there, and on that day? Specifically? No, I think someone else brought it to her attention and even then, that could have been after the fact.”

“So, Hannibal is the one with a stalker then?” Beverly suggested.

“That would make more sense in this situation, wouldn’t it? That article reads more like an exposé of Hannibal, and up until this point, I’ve been Freddie’s favorite punching bag. Whoever gave her those photos did so with the intention of harming Hannibal and my involvement was just icing on the cake for her.”

“She must be having a field day with this one,” Brian quipped, amusement tugging at the corners of his lips.

“A scandal *and* the chance to rag on Will? It must feel like Christmas,” Jimmy added on.

“Well, hey,” Beverly moved to lean in a little closer over Will’s desk. “For what it’s worth, you’ve got all the right people on your side. Before you know it, this whole thing will blow over and everything will go back to normal. I mean, yeah. Those pictures of you kissing Hannibal are going to be on the internet forever, but it’s not the end of the world, you know?”

“It’s a good thing you guys aren’t exhibitionists, or else the whole Behavioral Science Unit would be gagging right about now,” Brian joked before pointing into his open mouth and feigning a single, exaggerated gagging noise.

Beverly rolled her eyes. “Speak for yourself. Hannibal is a total DILF and I’m pretty sure he doesn’t even have kids.”

“A ‘DILF’? Seriously, Bev? According to who?”

“Oh, let’s see. Me, Will, and the people who read TattleCrime. There’s some serious jealousy brewing in that comment section over those pictures. Will is one lucky man.”

“I don’t often think of myself as being ‘lucky’ in any sense of the word,” Will chimed in, his amusement evident in his light tone of voice. “Apparently, I can’t even kiss a ‘DILF’ at his house without it making headlines somewhere.” He leaned back in his chair and in the distance, happened to catch sight of Alana walking down the center aisle that led to his desk. His expression fell.

Oh God, had she overheard the ‘DILF’ comments?

She approached Will slowly, her hands folded neatly in front of her body and a tight smile glued on her face. She acknowledged her other colleagues with a polite nod of her head before turning her attention towards the man of the hour. “Hey, Will. How are you holding up?”

“As well as I can be,” Will answered simply.

“I’m surprised you came in today,” Alana admitted. “Are you sure you don’t want to take the day to yourself? I don’t mind filling in for your next class if you need a little more time to breathe.”

Will waved off her friendly suggestion. “It’s hardly the most stressful thing that I’ve ever had to deal with.”

Alana regarded Will with a sympathetic look. “While that may be true, there’s also nothing wrong with taking a mental health day.”

“Yes, a mental health day that won’t do much of anything to improve mine,” Will scoffed.

“How about a cup of coffee then? There’s a fresh pot in the break room and we can talk along the way,” Alana offered.

Will’s initial instinct was to decline, of course, but he also tried to remind himself that denying Alana this conversation now would only delay the inevitable. After all, it was only by her recommendation that he even met Hannibal in the first place and now, his relationship with her mentor had been made public, albeit against his will. It only made sense that Alana would want to voice her thoughts on the matter, though Will suspected that in place of a blessing, he was going to face some level of scrutiny from her.

With little other choice than to oblige, Will rose to his feet and stepped around his desk to stand beside Alana. “Lead the way.”

They barely made it out of his classroom before Alana spoke back up. “So, you and Hannibal, huh? You know, I can’t say that I saw it coming.”

“That would make two of us,” Will admitted honestly. “I wasn’t even interested in being his friend when I first met him, and now there’s pictures of us kissing on the internet.”

Alana glanced beside herself at Will. “I know this is a personal question for you, and you’re obviously under no obligation to answer it if you don’t want to, but I’ll admit that I am curious. This thing between you and Hannibal, when did it begin?”

A soft hum left Will’s throat while he considered her question. “A few months ago. He invited me over for dinner one evening and I agreed to join him. I’m sure you can fill in the blanks for what happened from there.”

“Did he suggest this dinner to you during one of your sessions with him?”

Will resisted the urge to sigh. He seemed to have been doing a lot of that lately. “No, because we don’t have any formal sessions together. I’m not Hannibal’s patient. I never was.”

“He was the one who administered and signed off on your psychiatric evaluation for the FBI,” Alana reminded him. “And you have regularly scheduled meetings with him at his office, don’t you?”

“Not in an official capacity,” Will corrected her while turning to enter the break room. “After he rubber stamped me, all that Hannibal and I ever did was talk, mostly about cases.”

As the door swung shut behind them, it was Alana who gave into her urge to sigh. “Will, I need you to take a moment to consider the…implications of entering a romantic relationship with a man who, for all intents and purposes, was essentially your psychiatrist. He may not be your psychiatrist in an official capacity, no, but he is also one of the few people who is actually capable of grounding you back in reality when you dive a little too deep into the minds of killers. You are especially vulnerable during those times and if you happen to view Hannibal as your only anchor amidst the storm, even on a subconscious level, it could lead to codependency. Do you ever worry about what may happen if you allow your life to become too deeply intertwined with his?”

Will deliberately avoided meeting her gaze by busying himself with a few of the tiny, single-serve creamers that sat in a container beside the coffee pot. “Not particularly, no. You’re the only person who’s tried bringing it up so far, and with all due respect, Dr.Bloom, I don’t personally agree with your assessment. Hannibal supports me out in the field, yes, but it’s not like either of us couldn’t survive separation if it came down to it. He’s hardly my keeper.”

Alana stepped closer to Will, her arms crossing loosely just underneath her bust. “I just don’t want you to get hurt, Will. That’s all.”

“Are you questioning Hannibal’s intentions in all of this?”

“Frankly? Yes, but…” Alana sighed once more, this time in defeat. “I don’t believe that they’re ill-placed. That article is a gross exaggeration at best and I’ve known Hannibal long enough to know that he isn’t the type of provider who would legitimately disregard ethics.”

“A ‘gross exaggeration’? I was thinking more along the lines of libel. Freddie is pushing the narrative that Hannibal sleeps with his patients, Alana,” Will argued. “It’s a blatant lie. She’s milking that psychiatric evaluation for all it’s worth, which may I remind you, wasn’t much if you’ve read any of her earlier articles about me.”

“Will, I don’t agree with any of the things that she wrote about either of you. She’s a *tabloid* journalist for God’s sake. Everything she puts out has to be taken with a grain of salt, but even so, the best lies are still based in truth. Hannibal was your psychiatrist, briefly. If you two ever intended on going public with your relationship at any point, she would have written an article about it regardless of whether she had those pictures or not. It would have only been a matter of time.”

“I just–” Will cut himself off while stepping aside to allow Alana the space to prepare her own coffee. “I didn’t want Hannibal to get dragged into any of this.”

“It comes with the territory, Will. There’s no sense in beating yourself up over it,” Alana popped a lid over the disposable cup, then nodded in the direction of the door. “Good to go?”

“Yeah,” Will answered while moving to hold it open for her. He thought back to what Hannibal had told him the day before, the reassurances that none of what had happened was his fault. “I suppose so.”

Both Alana and Will walked side-by-side in a relatively comfortable silence as they made their way back to the lecture hall, a warm cup of coffee resting in each of their hands. Right as Will was pushing through the door into his classroom, his phone vibrated from somewhere in his pocket. After fishing it out, his eyes flicked down to the screen to find that he'd just received a message from Hannibal.

[11:15] Are you available to meet me at the front entrance? Your appointment is in thirty minutes.

A vague memory of Hannibal seated behind his desk with a cordless phone pressed up against his ear resurfaced in Will's mind. He'd tuned the majority of that conversation out since it had taken place in a language that Will didn't understand–Italian, if he had to make an educated guess–but after hanging up, Hannibal had told him that…

That he'd made Will an appointment with his tailor.

Shit.

[11:17] Yeah. I'll be right there.

Will had trouble recalling the last time he attended an event with a formal dress code. Invites to any such occasions were seldom extended his way and while the exclusion he often faced as a result of his social ineptitude rarely ever bothered him to any significant degree, he knew that becoming an item with a well-known socialite meant that on occasion, his presence at Hannibal's side would be expected, if not strongly preferred. Of course, Will also knew that he wasn't being actively forced to partake in Hannibal's pretentious version of socializing, but as the good doctor had once told him, a good relationship was not without compromise. So long as the liquor flowed freely, as Hannibal promised it would, then Will might be able to dampen his empathy long enough to survive a few rounds of the insufferable small talk that he would inevitably be subjected to. The issue of sitting through the opera performance itself still remained, but Will had plenty of time to conjure up alternative ideas for keeping himself entertained.

Allowing your partner to have perfectly bespoke garments made for you wasn't something that the majority of people would consider a 'compromise' in any sense of the word. For some, the concept of being spoiled in such a way could even be considered a wild fantasy, but to Will, the thought of exposing his half-naked body to a complete stranger in order to have his measurements taken for a suit that he didn't have any particular desire for didn't exactly fall in line with how he preferred to spend his lunch hour. Will's existing suit jackets, what few of them he owned, were the mass-produced sort purchased entirely from department stores and not a single pair of his slacks matched the source fabric for any of them, but their place in Will's closet was irrelevant. Hannibal wasn't the type of man to outright bawk at the idea of donning a suit, or any piece of one, that wasn't masterfully tailored to the body of its wearer, but where Will was concerned, he felt that it would be a grave disservice to his empath's remarkable beauty to present him in anything that wouldn't showcase it perfectly.

A tuxedo was undoubtedly in order and, if Hannibal could successfully amend Will to his wishes, a fine pair of leather Oxfords to accompany it.

When Will imagined Hannibal's tailor, he pictured a sleek, modern storefront in an affluent shopping district where name-brand designers were not only the norm, but the expectation. When instead, Hannibal pulled into the modestly-sized parking lot of a stand alone building that sat only a few blocks down from an unremarkable, suburban neighborhood, he couldn't help but quirk a brow in the older man's direction. There was nothing spectacular about its construction. The outer walls appeared to have been made from rustic brick and there was no discernible signage in Will's immediate line of sight to indicate that it was even a place of business. In fact, if it weren't for the two other vehicles parked out front, he would have almost assumed that it had been abandoned.

"This is a tailor?" Will asked with a hint of incredulity in his voice while he pressed his thumb down into the release button on his seatbelt. It popped up with a soft 'click'.

"This is her studio, yes," Hannibal confirmed before turning to exit the car. When he reached the passenger side door, Hannibal, like the impeccable gentleman he was, opened it for Will to climb out. "She does not usually see clients here, but given our dreadfully short time frame, we do not have the luxury of waiting for a formal appointment at her shop."

The urge to know why Hannibal's tailor seemed to be so willing to make an exception for him specifically popped up in Will's mind and, perhaps more frighteningly, he also wanted to know how much a rush job like this was going to cost.

He knew better than to allow either of those questions to actually materialize on his tongue.

When they entered the studio, a petite woman closer in age to Hannibal than to Will glanced up from her place behind a workbench. The grin of recognition that stretched across her face when she raked her eyes down the length of Hannibal's body unsettled Will in a way that ignited a spark of possessive jealousy within him. In an instant, his narrowed gaze flicked upwards to gauge Hannibal's reaction, his keen eyes remaining watchful for the slightest hint of fondness in the older man's expression. In turn, Hannibal merely offered her one of his tight, generic smiles and now having gained that small amount of reassurance, Will's gaze fell back down to the woman, who had since crossed the room to meet them. If there had ever been anything between them at any point in time, whether a casual fling or something more, it had long since dissolved

She offered Hannibal a handshake and a warm greeting in a language that Will was able to recognize as Italian. Hannibal returned her pleasantries in equal part before taking a single step back to gesture towards Will and redirect the bulk of her attention towards him.

"Viviana, this is my partner, Will Graham," he continued in English. "I would like to have his measurements taken. While we're here, we will also be choosing the fabric for his tuxedo."

Will wanted to shoot Hannibal a questioning look, but thought better of it. If Hannibal got his kicks out of playing a particularly expensive game of dress up, then so be it. Besides, Will's mind couldn't move past the fact that Hannibal had referred to him as his partner in conversation. The thought alone had a pleasant warmth blossoming throughout his chest. It was a foreign sensation, but not an unwelcome one in the slightest.

“Of course. I will fetch the sample book. Mr.Graham,” Viviana turned to address Will more directly, unknowingly yanking him back into the present where she and Hannibal resided. “I apologize, but I do not have a dressing room in my studio. The measurements will be most accurate if they are taken while you are in your undergarments. If you’d like, you can undress here or in the bathroom.” With that, Viviana excused herself in order to retrieve the aforementioned book of sample fabrics for Hannibal to peruse in the midst of Will’s upcoming discomfort. In her absence, Will spent a few moments longer than he should have trying to weigh out his only two options, neither of which were ideal. There was a third, technically, but Will wasn't going to allow himself to entertain that thought. The concept of making compromises for one’s partner was beginning to irk him, if only slightly. Regardless of his own feelings on the matter, as childish as they were, he wouldn’t refuse Hannibal this. Even Will had to admit that being doted on for once in his pitiful life actually felt nice.

“Will, your coat?” Hannibal offered as a subtle suggestion for the younger man to go ahead and begin undressing where he was, effectively making the choice for him.

Will nodded slowly while lifting his hands to comply. Hannibal stepped behind him to slide Will’s coat down from his shoulders before moving to drape it across his forearm. A worn, flannel shirt that did not conform to Hannibal's refined tastes in the slightest followed shortly after. A pair of boots, a cotton undershirt, and a dark pair of slacks quickly joined the growing pile of clothes in Hannibal’s arms a moment later, leaving Will clad in a pair of thin, sky blue boxer shorts. As he turned to set Will’s belongings aside on a nearby chair, Hannibal discreetly peeked at the tiny, white tag sewn on the inside of the tongue to one of Will’s shoes. He took a silent note of the size, then placed them neatly down onto the floor, side by side. By the time he returned his attention to Will, Viviana had already approached him with a measuring tape draped around her neck and a thick book of sample fabrics resting on her hip.

Hannibal took the weighty book for himself, then rotated it so that the labels on the dividing tabs could be more easily read. The fabrics were separated primarily by color and while Hannibal obviously knew that black was generally regarded as the standard color for most tuxedos, he instead flipped the book open to the tab labeled ‘BLU’. There, he found an impressive range of shades in a wide assortment of fabrics that ranged from cotton to silk and everything in between. After considering the options that were laid out before him, Hannibal turned the page and was pleased to discover that the next one held much richer shades of blue than the one before it. One in particular, a vibrant navy blue that was only offered in cashmere, caught his eye and held his attention. Its rich tones would complement the gorgeous blue of Will's eyes perfectly and he knew in that moment that no other color would suffice. Will’s beauty outweighed tradition.

Viviana worked quickly, dragging her tape measure along Will’s body and at various points, wrapping it snugly around him. Despite standing before her, reduced to only his underwear, Will didn’t find the process itself to be terribly invasive and if he imagined that Hannibal was currently admiring his bared form, if only by stealing little glimpses of it, then he came dangerously close to actually enjoying himself. Having led a fairly modest life, Will had never once known greed or hunger that couldn’t be satisfied through simple patience, but now that he’d finally received a taste of what it truly meant to be cherished by another person, he had grown insatiable. Throughout the course of their relationship, Hannibal had

gleefully risked awakening Will to a spoiled life that held little room for disappointment and now, whenever possible, Will wanted to lie at the center of Hannibal's undivided attention. Will didn't care much for opera or the pretentious air of intellectualism that any such events tended to promote, but he tried to remind himself that his attendance didn't have to leave him feeling miserable. There was still plenty of time for him to turn this potential negative into a positive, so while Viviana wrapped up with his remaining few measurements, Will focused on applying his imagination in a way that was purely self-indulgent.

Above all else, he wanted to ensure that throughout the entirety of their trip to the opera, the performance itself would be the last thing on Hannibal's mind. He needed a subtle, yet impactful, method of not only demanding his partner's attention, but keeping it on himself. In Hannibal's eyes, Will was temptation incarnate–the sweetest sin he would ever have the pleasure of indulging in. Hannibal's tableaus elevated swine into art, but the raw potential of Will's empathy meant that he alone held the capacity to elevate him, to elevate them both, into something that transcended beauty. His very presence in Hannibal's life demanded nothing short of hopeless devotion, and Will not only knew this, but took great pleasure in it. Will anticipated that he wouldn't encounter much resistance from Hannibal in any endeavor he chose to take on, so with that in mind, he crafted a particularly wicked plan that was almost guaranteed, he thought, to catch his consistently poised and polished lover off guard. Their sex life was far from lacking, but Will wanted to inspire a sense of unbidden desire in Hannibal so ravenous, the beast within him would tear right past his person suit and bare itself to him, antlers and all.

When Will finally made it back to his desk at Quantico, he opted to ignore the homemade meal that Hannibal had surprised him with just minutes earlier and after opening an incognito tab on his browser, visited a website that was well-known for its selection of adult toys.

That night, as he laid in bed with the covers kicked aside and off of his body, Will looked at his phone screen and the email confirmation that stared back at him. His order was set to arrive in a week's time, which, coincidentally enough, also lined up with the date of his final fitting for the tuxedo that Hannibal had insisted on having made for him. Mondays were often one of the busiest for psychiatrists and other doctors alike, so he would be attending that secondary appointment on his own, but Will honestly didn't mind. If anything, the fact that Hannibal wouldn't be present there with him to admire the end result of Viviana's craftsmanship provided Will with a unique advantage. Not only would his enhanced appearance on the night of the opera come as a pleasant surprise to Hannibal, like a bride revealing her dress to a tearful fiancé on her wedding day, but when the older man realized that Will, his bashful, darling Will, had so brazenly chosen to throw all caution to the wind by filling himself with a vibrating plug that he alone would have control of…

Hannibal would be done for, completely and utterly.

At least, that was the reaction Will was hoping for. He didn't know what Hannibal's feelings were regarding sex toys. In the time they've been sharing their bodies with each other, the topic had never arisen between them and as far as Will had seen, Hannibal didn't seem to own anything beyond lubricant and condoms, the latter of which had disappeared from their sex life entirely the moment both men received clear results from the screening they'd agreed to

take for one another. The whole point of this little stunt was that it was supposed to be a surprise, and while Will was confident that his plan would remain under wraps until the right opportunity to spring it upon Hannibal presented itself, his pessimistic personality made it so that he couldn't help but dwell upon the more negative of the potential outcomes. For all Will knew, Hannibal would find it terribly inappropriate and not in the way that would lead to the daring and sexy rendezvous that he wanted them to embark on. Neither Will nor Hannibal had any particular inclination towards exhibitionism and although the inherent risk was part of the appeal, Hannibal was a greedy and possessive lover and unashamedly so. Will was *his* and his alone. If Hannibal could help it, and he most certainly could, the only soul on this earth who would ever again have the privilege of savoring Will's body and mind while he was in a state of wanton abandonment would be *him*. Perhaps the sex toy itself wouldn't be the issue so much as the location. They were going to be in *public* for fuck's sake, mingling amongst Baltimore's elite. All the while, the crowd of wealthy snobs and socialites around them would be blissfully unaware of their debauchery. That was, of course, assuming that Hannibal would agree to be a willing participant in said debauchery.

Will placed his phone on his bedside table and rolled onto his side. He sighed as he resigned himself to the fact that it was impossible for him to know how this was ultimately going to play out for him. The best that Will could manage was careful optimism and even that felt unfamiliar to him.

"Shit," Will cursed under his breath as he scrabbled for purchase against the door of Hannibal's shower, his hand slipping down from the sleek glass. He had one leg propped up onto the built-in bench while the other remained planted on the tiled floor below him. Behind himself, he was trying to line up the curved tip of the vibrating plug against his prepared rim, but the awkward angle of his wrist was making the task of actually pushing it inside more difficult and taxing than it needed to be. He'd nearly blown his cover by insisting to Hannibal that it would be better for him to shower alone, clinging to the excuse that he simply wanted to be in and out as quickly as possible. That was nearly a half hour ago and if Hannibal hadn't grown suspicious of him by now, each subsequent minute spent in the bathroom would almost guarantee an untimely discovery.

When, for what was perhaps the fifth time in a row, the end of the plug slipped out of place, Will huffed out an exasperated sigh. In a fit of frustration, he brought his other leg down and moved quickly to lower his entire body to the shower floor, his back pressing roughly against the tile. From there, he unceremoniously hiked his legs up to his chest by hooking his arms underneath the bend of each knee, then reached down between his parted thighs to press the damned toy against his hole for yet another attempt. He could have cried with relief when it finally slid inside, all the way down to the flared base. Most of the lube he'd applied to it earlier had since washed away with the water's constant spray from above him, but the residual slickness from when he'd fingered himself open remained, allowing for its smooth entry.

"Will?" Hannibal's voice sounded through the door along with a polite knock that barely registered in Will's ears over the constant noise of water beating against the tile and glass around him. "Is everything alright?"

The speed with which Will scrambled to his feet impressed even himself, and with no more time to spare, he hurriedly called out his reassurances. “Yeah, I’m fine! I’ll be out in a minute!” He sincerely hoped that his uneven tone of voice didn’t entirely betray the nervousness he felt in this moment.

If Hannibal felt unsettled by Will's rushed words to any extent, he didn't show it. Instead, he stepped away from the door and allowed Will the privacy to finish up with his shower. After stepping out and onto the soft, foam mat that rested conveniently in front of the shower door, Will ran the nearest towel through his damp curls before moving to drag that same towel along his body. He could only hope that it was clean and, knowing Hannibal, it likely was. The moment Will deemed his skin dry enough, he reached for the ridiculously smooth undergarments that had arrived at his doorstep just days earlier along with a pair of leather dress shoes that made Will wince when he noticed the hefty price listed on the return slip. He couldn’t tell whether the sapphire blue fabric was fashioned from silk or satin (He could imagine, rather humorously, Hannibal scoffing at the idea of buying anything made from polyester) and he most certainly wasn’t going to allow himself to dwell on the luxurious feel of sliding them up and over his hips.

It really was a shame that he and Hannibal were probably going to make a mess of them by the end of the night.

Hannibal had taken it upon himself to lay out the separate pieces of Will’s perfect, navy blue tuxedo out on his bed for the other man to pull on when he emerged from the bathroom. In doing so, he failed to notice the compact remote that his little minx of a lover had discreetly tucked away inside the right waist pocket. When Will finally did step out of the bathroom, his skin still flushed a light shade of red from the heat of the water, Hannibal regarded him with a warm look and crossed the room to meet him.

“How are you feeling, darling?” Hannibal asked, his voice holding none of the curiosity that Will could see reflected in the dark amber of his gaze.

“I’m fine. Are you sure I can’t have a drink before we go?” Will would much rather have Hannibal believe that his apparent discomfort was merely the result of the anxiety he felt wherever social gatherings were concerned. While that did technically hold true for Will, especially now that Freddie’s article has had more than enough time to circulate throughout Hannibal’s social circle (If there was one thing that rich snobs couldn’t get enough of, it was gossip), but his introverted nature wasn’t the sole cause for his jittery nerves tonight.

Will prayed to the God he wasn’t sure he believed in that Hannibal wouldn’t see past his ruse.

Hannibal glanced down at his watch, then looked back at Will, his expression thoughtful. “You may have a single glass of wine. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to enjoy more drinks at the opera.”

Will instantly perked up, appearing hopeful then. “Please?”

Hannibal could never deny him for long. “Of course, darling. I will return in just a moment.” With that, he excused himself from the room and ventured downstairs into his kitchen where

he searched for an appropriate bottle of wine to pour from, preferably one that had already been opened.

Upstairs, Will took advantage of his newfound solitude by making a beeline towards the nightstand that lied on Hannibal’s side of the bed. Before pulling the top drawer open, he spared an extra few seconds to glance behind himself, back towards the entryway. In the distance, he could hear the faintest sound of glass clinking against a hard surface, likely the smooth granite of Hannibal's countertops, and it was then that Will forced himself to return his attention back to the task at hand. He reached for the lubricant from within and firmly grasped at base of the smallest bottle, as though in the event of Hannibal’s premature return, the act of him doing so would adequately conceal the fact that he was holding something, and rather sheepishly too. Will slid the drawer shut as quietly as he possibly could, then stepped around to the side of the bed where his clothes had been laid out. As he slipped the bottle of lube into the same pocket that contained the vibrator’s remote, he became acutely aware of the pounding thrum of his heart. With only seconds remaining, Will snatched his pants up from the bed, but before he even could pull them over a single leg, Hannibal came sauntering into the room with a glass of wine in hand.

“Cos d'Estournel,” he announced while holding the glass out for Will to take. “It is primarily a Cabernet Sauvignon, but it also contains a blend of Merlot, Petit Verdot, and a touch of Cabernet Franc. We do not have time to properly decant this wine, but it should still be quite enjoyable nonetheless.”

Will noted that Hannibal had been particularly light with his pour, but knew better than to comment on it. Doing so would be rude, after all and Hannibal abhorred rudeness above all else. Instead, he simply accepted what the other man was willing to offer him and lifted the glass up to his lips for a taste much too large to be considered a sip, decidedly forgoing the standard swirl and sniff of the rich, red liquid within. "When do we leave?" He asked after swallowing.

Ignoring Will's unseemly lack of proper wine etiquette, Hannibal checked his watch once more. "I would like to leave within the hour. I do still need to take a shower, so I will be doing that now. I suggest you finish your wine before getting dressed," he gave Will a pointed look, almost like a warning, before disappearing into the bathroom.

"Noted," Will said before falling silent as the door clicked shut behind Hannibal. Immediately following the other man's departure, Will lingered in place, right where he had been standing at the bedside, and waited patiently for the muffled sound of water to fill the room before he dared to down the rest of his wine in a way that Hannibal would see as wholly undignified. After placing the now empty glass down onto the nightstand, he moved to slip his hand inside the right waist pocket and felt around for the slim remote within. When he found it, Will's attention momentarily flicked up and over towards the bathroom door before falling back to his hand as he pulled the remote out just enough to reveal its power button. Will steadied himself, then drew in a deep breath and held it down with his thumb. A few seconds later, the plug inside him whirred to life, buzzing with a low, pulsating thrum that made his breath hitch. Just as quickly as he'd powered it on, Will promptly turned the toy back off and returned the remote to his pocket, where it would remain until it found its way into Hannibal's (hopefully welcoming) hands.

In nearly every aspect of his life, Hannibal was an efficient man, so Will knew that it wouldn't be long before he was more or less prepared to leave and meanwhile, Will himself was still standing there, clad in only the silky blue undergarments with an inseam too short to be considered boxers, but also too long to be classified as briefs. They were strange, really, but Hannibal had not only chosen them for him to wear (had *paid* for this overpriced slip of fabric), but had also taken the time to have them delivered directly to Will's doorstep, so he appreciated the gift for what it was. Despite himself, Will was beginning to feel a little more level-headed than he had in the days leading up to tonight, or perhaps the alcohol was merely loosening him up in the way he'd hoped it would. Regardless of where the answer actually lied, Will reached for his dress shirt and pulled it on, sliding his arms through each sleeve before giving the bottom hem a gentle tug to pull it down into place. One-by-one, the buttons were done up and after the last one was pushed through the topmost buttonhole, Will tugged at his collar with a curled index finger in a futile attempt to loosen it. He honestly did wonder at times how Hannibal ever managed to tolerate wearing formal attire like this day in and day out because regardless of whatever he, or any other pretentious asshole had to say, a tuxedo was barely any different from his three-piece suits. Sighing, Will grabbed his pants for the second time that night and shoved his foot through the appropriate pantleg. Once those too were pulled up and buttoned into place, Will instinctively went to grab the jacket of his tuxedo, but paused when his eyes fell to the matching waistcoat laid out beside it.

It took everything Will had not to roll his eyes and fling the damned thing across the room. Compromise, he reminded himself. Compromise.

When Hannibal finally did step out of the bathroom, his face freshly shaven and his hair perfectly quaffed into its usual style, the sight that greeted him on the opposite side of the room instantly robbed him of his breath.

Oh, that tuxedo was an *excellent* choice. Will did not harbor the same appreciation for fine things as he did, but it didn't matter. Hannibal enjoyed upholding etiquette and establishing boundaries because it made the very concept of breaking them that much more pleasurable. Will's tuxedo cost more than that dreadful station wagon he insisted on driving around, but Hannibal wouldn't give so much as a second thought to tearing every last stitch of cashmere to shreds just so he could feel the smooth, creamy skin that he knew rested beneath it all.

"Mylimasis," It wasn't often that Hannibal found himself at a loss for words, but leave it to his empath to render him speechless in the presence of such remarkable beauty. He stepped closer to Will, making no attempt at concealing what he felt in this moment; the awe, the adoration, the complete and utter *devotion*.

None of it slipped past Will's perception. His empathy ensured that much. "How do I look?" He asked this as though he wasn't perfectly aware of the praise he was about to receive

Hannibal said nothing at first. In lieu of words, he reached up to take ahold of the loosened ends of Will's bowtie from where they rested on either side of his collar and began tying them together for him with practiced ease. Only when the final knot was tightened did Hannibal speak, his eyes lifting to meet Will's. "If my hunger for you could only ever be satiated by sight alone, then I would never know a day without nourishment."

Will grinned at the compliment. "I take it I look good then?"

Hannibal nodded. “You look wonderful, mylimasis. It will be an honor to have you by my side tonight.”

Mercy

Chapter Summary

TL;DR Hannibal's nose saves the day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The drive to the opera, although relatively short, felt like an eternity for Will.

As much as he hated to admit it, perhaps Jack had been right about something for once. Will wasn't thinking with the head that mattered because while he was perfectly capable of standing and walking around with relative ease, no amount of research could have prepared him for the delicious agony that came along with sitting. He was managing, of course, but only just barely. He had no other choice if he wanted to keep this naughty little surprise of his hidden from Hannibal, but God help him, the end of that plug was pressing directly into his prostate. And the road was bumpy. *God*, why was the road so bumpy? For what must've been the third or fourth time since they left, Will shifted his weight in a futile attempt to reduce some of the pressure, tilting his hips in directions he already knew weren't going to help and leaning in closer towards the driver's side. In doing so, he had to rest his elbow against the center console for support, but Hannibal didn't pay much mind to Will's restless fidgeting. It was all too easy for him to assume that Will's nerves were merely getting the better of him and to be fair, they were, but Will's impulsive decision to incorporate a sex toy into a night like this wasn't helping to ease those nerves in the slightest. If anything, it lit them aflame.

Hannibal was more sophisticated of a man than Will could ever hope to be. Even on his best day when in place of his flannel shirts and ill-fitting slacks, Will was wrapped up in a *cashmere* tuxedo of all things, he still felt as though he was only an accessory to upholding Hannibal's image and not even a particularly flashy one either. He knew that Hannibal's perception of him was quite the opposite, but for a man of his status, having Will accompany him as not only his guest, but as his perpetual 'plus-one' held a great deal of significance within his uppity social circles. Tonight would solidify their status as a couple and similarly, this would be Will's chance to prove to Hannibal that he could fit into his elegant world. Up until just a few months ago, Hannibal had essentially been an eligible bachelor, albeit an elusive one. For years– *decades* even–his love life had consisted of nothing beyond a countless series of short flings (Hannibal was, after all, never one to deny himself any of life's pleasures), but when Will stepped into his life, the rules for Hannibal's own were fundamentally changed. The lines between how it was both before and after Will have since blurred and Will himself sometimes wondered what apparent qualities he possessed that could have possibly inspired such a dramatic shift within Hannibal.

There hadn’t been much of a discussion on how they were going to navigate their relationship now that it had been made public. Both Hannibal and Will still felt varying degrees of irritation over the fact that Freddie had been brazen enough to take that choice away from them in the first place, but no matter the trial, their ability to adapt was frighteningly impressive. Jack had easily been able to turn a blind eye to the taboo nature of their relationship because the stability it provided Will meant that more cases were getting solved. Alana, on the other hand, held her reservations, but she also knew that she ultimately didn’t have much ground to stand on for any formal complaints. As far as his other colleagues were concerned, Beverly supported them wholeheartedly as did Brian and Jimmy, so overall, Will’s most important bases were covered.

But what about Hannibal’s?

Will had fussed. Will had tried to argue with Hannibal until he was blue in the face, but Hannibal wasn’t having any of it. For every protestation Will threw his way, Hannibal had been able to provide a swift and convincing counterpoint to each and every last one. Multiple, even. Admittedly, Hannibal had found Will’s concern for his livelihood to be endearing, if not slightly exhausting. Ever the patient man, however, Hannibal also didn't express any irritation over the excessive need for him to repeat himself. He reaffirmed that he wasn’t going to face any tangible consequences from his daring choice to pursue a relationship with him, a man who was indeed his former patient. Will himself didn’t particularly care to acknowledge that little piece of information since, in his opinion, it was irrelevant. If the board of ethics for psychiatrists and other mental health providers alike were to ever investigate Hannibal over something as ridiculous as tabloid journalism, they wouldn’t come close to uncovering anything that would legitimately warrant the revocation of his license to practice.

By the time they arrived at the opera house, Will was itching to get back on his feet. If this was how he felt after a short car ride, how on earth was he ever going to tolerate sitting through several acts' worth of singing, dancing, and God knew what else would be happening on that stage? With any luck, he'd be able to tempt Hannibal into being his unwitting savior sooner rather than later. As he stepped out of the car and onto the pavement, Will discreetly felt around his right waist pocket for the indelicate items he'd stashed away earlier, his irrational fears getting the better of him for that split moment. Nearby, Hannibal was handing his keys off to a youthful valet, who promptly slid into the driver's side of the Bentley, only barely containing his excitement for an opportunity to drive such a high end vehicle, even if it was only going to be through a parking lot. When the car rolled off, Hannibal stepped up beside Will and led them inside, not even bothering to hide the besotted look on his face as he glanced beside himself at the only man who, without a shadow of a doubt, was worthy of being called his partner–his equal in every sense of the word.

Will bristled ever so slightly as Hannibal carried him through the bulk of the crowd, which seemed to be growing larger by the minute as more and more guests filed their way through the front entrance. Fortunately, it wasn't long until they happened upon a set of ornate, double doors, both of which had been propped open, and Will was abundantly thankful to be ushered past them by a gentle, guiding hand along his back. Considering Hannibal's popularity, it was a wonder they weren't stopped somewhere in their path, whichever path that was. Having very little interest in the performing arts, Will didn't know the first thing about this place, but

even so, he trusted that Hannibal wouldn't lead him astray. This new room, although much smaller in size, appeared to be a lounge of some sort with multiple seating areas scattered throughout and a bar situated along the back wall.

"Making good on your promise?" Will asked while casting a pointed look towards the long rows of bottles in front of them, his eyes lingering on the rich ambers of what he knew to be an excellent selection of whiskey.

"I always do," Hannibal answered without turning to face Will. Instead, he approached the nearest bartender and requested to open a tab.

Will waited while Hannibal placed an order for wine, the name of which quickly became lost to him before the other man had even finished speaking. Then came an order for something that Will actually could pronounce; scotch. Both of their respective drinks were then prepared and presented to them in a timely fashion and with that, Hannibal brought them over to a lone pair of cushioned chairs, separated only by a tiny, rounded end table.

Oh, wonderful. More sitting.

Will slowly eased himself into the rightmost chair whilst trying his best to maintain a neutral expression. Thankfully, the worn cushion was a little more forgiving than the firm, leather seats in Hannibal's Bentley. After settling himself in, Will lifted his glass up for his first taste of the smooth and smoky liquid within. God only knew how many of these he would need to slam back before he could finally muster up the courage to slide that little remote in his pocket over to Hannibal. Before Will knew it, half of his scotch had disappeared and judging by the excess warmth that had since spread throughout his belly, a buzz wasn't far behind. Will knew that he needed to pace himself. The absolute last thing he wanted for tonight was to reduce himself to a drunk, stumbling fool. It would be unbecoming of him–rude even, especially as Hannibal's guest. After all, if he was going to cause a stir, he would prefer it to be within Hannibal's loins. Will looked beside himself at the table that sat between them. It was just large enough to hold their drinks, but nothing more. If he moved too suddenly, he'd probably send their glasses crashing to the floor.

Without thinking, Will shifted his body only to regret it almost instantly. God, he really shouldn’t have moved his hips that way because of course, the end of that plug had managed to find its way back to his prostate. All he’d wanted to do was set his drink down, but now, he was clutching it tighter than ever.

Maybe one more sip wouldn’t hurt.

Will peeked up from his glass and watched as an older woman with sleek, black hair sashayed her way through the crowd and into the lounge. The only reason he had even noticed her in the first place was because her movements appeared to hold intention behind them and just his luck, his gut instinct was almost always the correct one, right from the get-go. She was a petite woman; short in stature with a lithe frame that was accentuated by the fitted silhouette of a floor-length evening gown. When she reached them, she regarded Hannibal with a look of warm familiarity, her bright red lips spreading into a smile that, if it were any wider, would have almost certainly split her face in two.

“Hannibal! Oh, it’s so good to finally see you again! It’s been too long, really. I trust you’ve been well?” As she greeted him, she placed a single, gloved hand on Hannibal’s shoulder, her touch light, fleeting, and friendly. Afterwards, she stepped back and gestured for Hannibal to leave with her.

Hannibal returned her pleasantries in full while rising from his seat to follow her out and Will practically jumped at the opportunity to join him. “Indeed, I have. I see we’ll be in good company tonight.”

The woman led them back out into the main hall, then shifted her gaze from Hannibal to Will, and gave him a once-over. Will didn’t detect any judgment concealed within. Only curiosity. “And who is this young man you’ve brought along with you tonight? Are you going to introduce him?”

“It would be a pleasure. Mrs.Komeda, this is my partner, Will Graham, and Will,” Hannibal extended his hand out to rest it on the curved small of Will’s back. “This is Mrs.Komeda. She is a good friend of mine.”

Cherry lips parted in a soft gasp. She was undoubtedly surprised, but pleasantly so. “Your partner? My, that’s wonderful to hear! Oh, look at him. He’s just a darling thing, isn’t he? And those eyes! They’re gorgeous! Why, Mr.Graham, that shade of blue will give that fine tuxedo of yours a run for its money,” she lauded, cheerfully fawning over the younger man before turning her attention back to Hannibal. “You have exquisite taste, Hannibal. As always.”

“You are too kind, Mrs.Komeda,” Unlike Will, accepting praise came naturally to Hannibal.

No matter how short the figurative pedestal might have been, Will wasn’t accustomed to standing on one by any means, especially when it had been placed there for him by a complete stranger. He appreciated Komeda’s seemingly genuine compliments for what they were, as anyone would, but Will didn’t exactly know how to properly accept one. For the most part, his experience with receiving praise only extended to Jack clapping him on the back whenever he managed to provide the missing pieces that led to them solving a case. Within the realm of Hannibal’s mind palace, Will occupied a concerning amount of space, but a lover’s admiration was quite a bit different from that of strangers. He was out of his element.

“Would it be inappropriate of me to ask how long you two have been together?” Komeda asked then.

Hannibal’s hand remained on Will’s back while he answered her question. “Not at all. Will and myself have been involved for several months now. In bringing him here with me tonight, my intention is to introduce him to the opera, and La Traviata is an excellent performance for a newcomer to digest.”

“I couldn’t agree more. You know,” Komeda’s grin returned then, this one more sincere than the last. “One of the first dates my husband ever took me on was to the opera, so I believe there is some real merit behind sharing such a wonderful form of art with your partner.” The fondness of the memory drew a nostalgic sigh out of her.

Komeda turned to address Will more directly. “Mr.Graham, how did you and Hannibal meet?” Her question was meant as subtle encouragement for the other man to join in on their conversation.

Fortunately for Will, that was simple enough for him to answer. “Uh, please. You can call me Will, and I met Hannibal through a mutual friend. My line of work requires me to consult with psychiatrists on occasion and my colleague recommended Hannibal for a particular case we were working on.”

“Of course. What is it that you do for a living, Will?”

Will hesitated at her next question. For him, there were very few people in this world with whom he could candidly discuss the true nature of his work and socialites were not included in that exceedingly small group. Well, every socialite save for Hannibal, of course, because in nearly every aspect of their lives, that man seemed to be the exception and never the rule.

Instead, Will settled for an answer that, while still technically true, purposefully omitted the more unsavory aspects of enduring a career in the FBI. “I’m a teacher.”

Komeda nodded, though Will could see the confusion that crossed her face then and he honestly couldn’t blame her for it. He would admit that his earlier description did not accurately line up with what most people would think of as a teacher’s job, though the alternative would have hardly been any better. “What grade do you teach?”

“Uh, post-secondary.”

Komeda’s eyebrows rose. “Oh! You’re a professor? Then, allow me to amend my prior statement. What subject do you teach?”

“Forensic science,” Will replied before lifting his glass up to his lips for another sip. He peered up from the rim and into the dark amber of Hannibal’s eyes for the briefest of moments. It was a silent request that he take the conversation away.

Hannibal picked up on the younger man's subtle cue immediately and offered to fill in the blanks for Komeda. "Will is a criminal profiler for the FBI. While his primary job is to serve as a professor, he is, on occasion, called away from his classroom to work on cases when the need for his expertise arises."

"That is fascinating," Komeda commented. "Will must be quite good at what he does."

A small, knowing smile tugged at the corners of Hannibal's lips. If only Komeda knew the depths of how truly gifted his darling was. "Very much so, and since we are on the topic of our work, I must ask how the manuscript for your next novel is progressing. I believe you said that you were drawing inspiration from the works of Virginia Woolf?"

Will noted the swift transition. It was Hannibal's attempt at redirecting the majority of Komeda’s attention away from Will and although his chosen tactic was by no means clever, its simplicity didn’t make it any less effective. Both Hannibal and Komeda soon fell into a familiar pattern of talking, traveling the gamut of topics from their respective careers to when

in the world Hannibal planned on hosting another one of his famous dinner parties. The answer Hannibal gave her wasn't the one that Will had wanted to hear (much to his dismay, it seemed that this garish tuxedo of his would be making a repeat appearance in the near future), but rather than dwelling on that discomforting piece of information, Will filed it away for later and set his sights on Hannibal's jacket. More specifically, the left waist pocket.

Will kept his eyes fixated on Hannibal and Komeda while he retrieved the vibrator's remote and readied it in his hand, his movements slow and cautious. Over the next several minutes, he watched, waited, and listened for the right moment to strike. He didn't have a single care for whatever pretentious bullshit either of them were going on about, but when Hannibal suddenly raised his arm to gesture towards something on the other side of the room, Will knew that it was now or never. Will extended his arm out and worked quickly to slide the remote past the narrow opening in the fabric of Hannibal's jacket. He let go and it fell directly into place, right where he wanted it to be.

Success.

"Well, you take care for now, Hannibal," Komeda eventually said. "I'm sure we'll be reconvening after the performance anyhow. Will, it was lovely to meet you." With that, she turned to take her leave, her dress billowing out behind her as she walked away. Will would have returned her kindness, but his patience for extending polite, benign conversations any further was running dangerously thin as it was.

Will waited until she was out of earshot before moving to lean in closer towards Hannibal, his lips just barely brushing the shell of the taller man's ear as he opened his mouth to speak. This was it. This was as perfect of an opportunity as he was going to get and despite himself, Will wasn't about to let his nerves get the better of him. His heart may have been beating at a mile a minute, but his determination to follow through won over.

"Check your left pocket," Will whispered, his hushed words coming out in a rush, as though he feared that if he spoke too slowly, someone would overhear him. It was nearly impossible, of course, given the number of people mingling about the area, none of whom were paying much mind to anything that existed outside the realm of their respective groups. As seemingly self-absorbed as the crowd was, touting a laundry list of so-called 'achievements' to anyone who had the misfortune of possessing a functional sense of hearing (Will could have scoffed at half of them because at least Hannibal's inflated ego actually held some merit behind it), Will knew better than to fall victim to a false sense of security. The issue of Hannibal's stalker had never truly left Will's mind since he'd first learned of them–since Freddie had published that damned article about them. While Will wasn't going to allow fear to dictate his life, he also didn't want to inadvertently plunge both Hannibal and himself into yet another scandal.

In turn, Hannibal raised a single brow at Will's words. Logically, he could only assume that Will must have placed something there without his knowledge (an admirable feat, but Will was as cunning as he was beautiful) and he intended to find out what it was. Hannibal slid his left hand into his pocket, his fingers soon making contact with the small, hard object Will had hidden inside. His brow furrowed ever so slightly as he pulled it out and glanced down to inspect the item more closely.

It was a remote.

Its design was sleek and simplistic; black in color with three buttons running in a single line down the center. Hannibal instantly recognized the three symbols; one for power at the very top, another below it with a plus sign, and a third one below that with the opposite minus sign. The whole thing was compact enough to fit into the palm of his hand, but with no visible brand or labeling anywhere along the front or back, Hannibal was left with more questions than answers. He spent a moment longer attempting to discern its use before silently admitting his defeat and turning to face Will.

“What is this for?” He finally asked.

In place of an explanation, all that Will managed to give was a simple command. “Press the power button,” he said. His voice was little more than a murmur.

Hannibal inclined his head towards Will, his curiosity now piqued. Without another word, he rested his thumb against the power button and held it down for a few seconds before releasing it, just as Will had wanted him to.

A moment passed between them, then suddenly, Will’s entire body stiffened as the plug inside him finally came to life, buzzing against the sensitive walls of his inner flesh. Will silently thanked the toy’s manufacturer for programming it to start off on the lowest setting. Otherwise, he wasn't sure if he would have been able to reliably suppress his body’s natural reaction to the abrupt influx of stimulation. If the room were a bit quieter, Hannibal almost surely would have been able to hear Will’s breath hitch as well, but he didn’t need to hear it to know that it had. He could see it with the way Will’s lips had parted, the soft, pink flesh now glistening beautifully with how much Will had been anxiously nibbling at it in the time leading up to this moment. In a matter of seconds, Will’s outward demeanor had shifted from being relatively collected, save for his innate discomfort in social settings, to visibly flustered. His chest was now rising and falling with each quickened breath he took, his pupils had dilated, and a warm blush was blooming over his cheeks. Hannibal couldn't help but think that Will looked utterly delectable like this and especially so in his tuxedo, but his background as a clinician made it so that he also couldn’t help but wonder where these reactions were rooted. Was Will merely feeling anxious in the face of an unfamiliar crowd, or could Hannibal reliably fall back on his wishful thinking and believe that Will’s signs of arousal were exactly that?

Hannibal paused then, his curious gaze falling back down to the remote in his hand. Why would Will be showing signs of arousal, and at a time like this? Although he would never admit to it aloud because doing so would reveal the shortcomings that came along with his age (perhaps browsing his iPad a bit more in his spare time wouldn’t be a *complete* waste), it took Hannibal longer than he honestly would have preferred for his mind to work out what exactly Will was trying to convey to him and the realization, when it finally did hit him, nearly brought him to his knees. He damn near found himself in need of a sturdy surface to steady himself against, like the wall beside them that Will had since leaned into.

This time, it was Hannibal’s breath that hitched. Oh, this beautiful, cunning boy was surely going to be the death of him and Hannibal would savor every sweet moment of blissful agony that Will bestowed upon him.

“Have you figured it out?” Will asked, now sounding a little breathless himself. He would surely go mad if Hannibal didn’t say something– *anything* –and soon.

“What a salacious boy you are,” Hannibal breathed. “Where has your modesty gone?” He all but plastered his frame along Will’s body, his nostrils flaring as he inhaled the subtle musk of the other man’s budding arousal. The scent itself was a unique blend–a myriad of wonderful aromas that were as sweet as they were intoxicating and it filled Hannibal’s senses with the only thing that mattered inside of this room; his exquisite, darling Will.

On instinct, Will drew his bottom lip back into his mouth and for once, he didn’t fold underneath the intensity of Hannibal’s gaze. Feeling rather emboldened, he even dared to meet it. “I think I’ve unlearned it,” he answered, recalling the suggestion Hannibal had given him on their first night together.

“It would seem that you have,” Hannibal commented while diverting the bulk of his attention back to the remote. Ever the perceptive man, however, Hannibal was still aware enough to notice the silhouette of a masculine figure from the peripherals of his vision and in turn, he lifted his head back up. Did he intend to approach them? His movements made it appear as though he did. With this in mind, Hannibal curled his fingers around the entirety of the remote to conceal it from view, then discreetly slipped it back into the same pocket he’d originally pulled it out of. His hand then lingered inside for a few seconds longer than necessary, his thumb sliding down to the second button.

He pressed it.

Will had seen him as well–that short, stout figure of a man from across the room. He hadn’t even bothered to look at him directly and neither had Hannibal, but both men had seen the twitchy movement–the hesitance in his gait. He didn’t walk in a straight line, as most would. He didn’t carry himself with the same confidence and poise that was practically innate to the thoroughbred types who flocked to events like these. He could try, of course, and he most certainly did, but this was someone who lacked the skill set to manifest their ideal reality by feigning the appearance of it. He was a fish out of water–a fidgety outsider trying so desperately to navigate an environment that ultimately, they didn’t belong in. He wasn't a killer, Will could decipher that much. Before his train of thought could derail into the full blown analysis his mind was naturally inclined to give, however, Will put a decisive stop to it, unwilling to divert any more of his mental energy to something that shouldn’t even be holding it in the first place. That man stood out to him, yes, but his presence should be an afterthought.

Shouldn’t it?

Out of nothing more than sheer curiosity, Will turned his head in the man’s direction, but when he swept his gaze across the dizzying sea of tailor-made suits and designer gowns, not a single one of those men matched the profile his mind had just conjured up. The figure had vanished.

And Will couldn’t have cared less.

The word ‘merciful’ took on a different meaning when Hannibal was the one applying its concept. For him, that word only ever gained any real significance when it was used in reference to Will. While they made their way up to the second level of the theatre, where the opera boxes loomed above the ground floor, Hannibal chose to grant Will a brief reprieve from the vibrator’s stimulation. It wouldn’t do to have Will stumbling about. At best, the people around them would merely assume that Will was a bit too indulgent with his liquor and while that did technically hold true for Will (and to a greater extent than he would ever care to admit to), Hannibal also didn’t want to give the impression that he was the type of man who would tolerate behavior as unseemly as public intoxication, especially from his partner. He didn’t feel shame to any real degree, but he did have an image to uphold–one that had taken him years of careful effort to forge and although many of the people here with him tonight had their proclivities, he preferred to keep his own exactly where they belonged; between Will and himself.

As they walked, Hannibal tugged at the figurative lapels of his person suit and smoothed out the wrinkles that Will had so impishly placed there. He led them all the way down to the end of the row and into one of the smaller boxes, the design of which was better suited for couples like themselves. The privacy that their little box would provide them throughout the performance was an added benefit that Hannibal hadn't even known they would need tonight, but since they had this privilege, he intended to exploit it to its fullest extent. He raked his appreciative gaze over Will’s body while the younger man slowly eased himself into his seat. He noted how excessively mindful his movements were. It was much like how Will handled himself following a particularly vigorous round of lovemaking, and the sight of it alone fed into Hannibal's pride.

After a few minutes, the lights dimmed, the voices around them settled, and a brief silence followed before a cacophony of rhythms and sounds streamed through the theatre's walls and flooded the air. Hannibal chose that exact moment to resume Will’s sensuous torture. The great volume of the orchestra’s music drowned out the startled noise that escaped Will’s throat when the plug inside him suddenly came whirring back to life. Hannibal felt that it was a pity to deny himself the sweet sound of his lover’s voice, but it could hardly be helped. He was perfectly aware of their present location–that they were in *public* –and yet, his insatiable greed where Will’s body was concerned still knew no bounds.

Normally, Hannibal would have been enraptured by the majesty and grandeur of the costumes and sets as each element of the story was introduced to the audience, but the performance happening on stage came second to the enticing display going on right beside him. Despite the slight discomfort, the starts of arousal were prickling at the edges of Will's vision. His back arched against the backing of his chair and it seemed that regardless of which way he tilted his hips, he couldn’t escape those delicious sparks of arousal that were working their way up through the core of his body. Hannibal smirked whenever Will shuddered. He could see the way Will’s breath caught in his throat as he tried and only barely succeeded in containing his voice. For the moment, Hannibal kept the vibrator on one of the more manageable settings. Will, however, knew that with Hannibal, mercy was a scarce resource and before long, the other man would be gleefully testing the limits of what his body could handle.

Now that they had gained some semblance of privacy, Hannibal no longer cared to conceal the remote that Will had so boldly entrusted to him. When the music rose to a crescendo, Hannibal's thumb would slide down to the second button so that the powerful vibrations would reach a crescendo of their own inside of Will. Every whine and whimper was drowned out by the beautiful music that filled the room, but for what Will couldn't convey with his voice, his body made up for it in spades. How many times had Will's head fallen back against the chair with his mouth hung open in a muffle cry, his hips rolling in slow and sensuous thrusts against the toy? Hannibal hadn't been counting, but whatever that number turned out to be, it wasn't enough. He wanted Will so achingly desperate for release that his cock would feel nothing short of rapturous when he finally chose to give it to him.

By the time they reached the first intermission, it didn't take long for Will to realize that he wasn't going to be able to withstand two more acts' worth of the blissful agony that Hannibal was subjecting him to. Hell, it would be a miracle if he made it through another two minutes.

"Hannibal, please. I can't—!" He wasn't even sure what he was begging for at this point. His whole body was thrumming with anticipation, pleasure rushing under his skin and across his nerves so intensely it was almost painful. Actually, it was starting to feel a little painful. His muscles clenched involuntarily, body tightening around the plug inside him as powerful pulses of vibration battered his prostate. It was quickly becoming too much for him to bear.

"God, Hannibal. Please just–" Will cut himself off for a moment longer, desperately searching for the right words to use. What did he want, exactly? For Hannibal to put an end to all of this? Not quite. He didn't want everything to come to a screeching halt, but if he waited any longer, the boundaries between pain and pleasure would disintegrate and Will didn't care for overstimulation. With this in mind, Will swallowed thickly and focused on forcing his body to still. He screwed his eyes shut, then made one final attempt to convey his needs, hoping that Hannibal would see his growing discomfort for what it truly was. "Hannibal, this is too much," he whispered, his voice sounding unusually small in that moment. "Please."

Hannibal ran his eyes down the length of Will's body, as though he was assessing him for something. "We've only just begun, darling. You haven't reached your limit yet, have you?"

His dismissiveness caused something in Will to finally snap. In hindsight, he and Hannibal should have established a safe word of some sort for this side of their relationship, but for the moment, it was much too late for that. His chair skidded out from behind him as Will stood and rushed out of the opera box. He heard Hannibal call out to him, but the sound of his own name wasn't registering in his ears.

Will needed this thing out. *Now*.

Franklyn was *seething*.

His sole purpose for coming out to the opera tonight was in the hopes of finding out how Freddie's article had affected Hannibal because surely, he must have caught wind of its publication by now. The other socialites in attendance certainly had. Although he only managed to catch bits and pieces of the gossip floating around the room, Franklyn had

gathered enough secondhand information to form his own theories and opinions. He didn't personally agree with the notion that Will Graham was a sugar baby, but he also couldn't outright scoff at the idea of a potential arrangement between the two men either. After all, Hannibal's affluence wasn't a secret and Will's tuxedo hung far too well on his smaller frame to have been purchased from a department store. Of course, Franklyn also couldn't have been certain as to whether or not his now former therapist would have even shown up to this particular performance, but for once in his life, Franklyn was trying to adopt an uncharacteristic sense of optimism, just as his new therapist had suggested he do.

Fortunately for Franklyn, Hannibal had decided to attend, but in doing so, he also brought along the object of his affection.

The scene they created inside their little box above the stage had provoked an internal sense of outrage in Franklyn. Both Hannibal and Will had strode into the opera house with ample poise, as though they were completely deaf to the hushed opinions of those around them.

As though the article had meant nothing at all.

Franklyn's restlessness could have caught anyone's attention and Tobias only just barely managed to conceal the disdain he felt for the terribly neurotic man beside him. Annoyance clouded the majority of his contempt and despite his best efforts, his outward expression still appeared rather tense, revealing the barest hint of his true feelings. For a split moment, his dark eyes fell to Franklyn's rounded belly and he allowed himself to wonder what type of sound the other man's intestines would make after they were processed and strung onto a violin. Or perhaps a cello?

He really should inquire about how Franklyn was doing, like any friend would, but he didn't want to. *God*, he really didn't want to, but if he allowed Franklyn's seemingly endless fidgeting to go unchecked for much longer, it would draw even more unwanted attention to themselves. With a heavy sigh, Tobias resigned himself to the fact that the wisest course of action here was to simply get it over with and turned to face him.

"Franklyn, you keep looking up at the boxes," Tobias pointed out. "Are you alright?"

The intrusion of Tobias's voice didn't calm Franklyn in the slightest. If anything, it exacerbated his existing agitation. "I have to use the bathroom," Franklyn abruptly declared before rising from his seat and walking down the narrow aisle that rested between the rows of chairs on either side of him.

Tobias watched with a dark glower as the other man made a hasty departure, allowing his contempt to finally peek through.

Definitely a cello.

Will wasn't sure how he managed to find the bathroom, but after limping his way down a hallway, he spotted the familiar signage for the men's room and pushed his way past the swinging door in a flurry. Once inside, he then set his sights on the closest stall, which happened to be the largest out of the long row in front of him. His hands trembled as he slid

the lock into place before they dropped down to fumble with the fly of his pants. In his haste, he hadn't even bothered to check whether or not there was anyone else in here with him, but the intolerable ache inside his body dulled any immediate sense of anxiety. If it turned out that he wasn't alone, then it couldn't be helped. Whoever it was would simply have to listen as the distinct hum of a vibrator filled the room after Will's shaky fingers managed to unceremoniously pull it out of himself.

And that's exactly what Will did.

The relief that washed over him once the plug was finally resting in his hand almost drove him to tears. The entire thing felt warm and sticky in his palm and the sensation of it, much like the object itself, rubbed him the wrong way. Even now, it was still thrumming away with no signs of stopping and Will was at a loss for what to do with it. For fuck's sake, where was the power button? Will didn't want to spare the damned thing so much as one more glance let alone hold onto it for any longer. On the other side of the room, the door swung open almost soundlessly. The soft taps of shoed feet meeting tile echoed against the walls before registering in Will's ears and in that moment, he felt his heart drop down into the pit of his stomach.

Yeah, he definitely needed to heed Jack's advice and start thinking with the head that mattered.

"Will?" Hannibal's voice called out to him and when Will looked down, he spotted the dark leather of his dress shoes through the bottom gap in the stall. Oh, *thank God*. At least he was going to be spared from complete and utter mortification tonight.

"Yeah?" Will managed.

The vibrator suddenly fell silent. A beat passed between them and then something occurred to Will. Had Hannibal been trying to turn it off since he left?

From underneath the stall, Will watched as Hannibal stepped closer. "May I come in?" He didn't try for the door as he asked this. If Will was going to let him in, he wanted it to be on his own volition.

Will's response was to unlock the door and hold it open for Hannibal to join him. After brushing past him, Hannibal slid the lock back into place, then turned to face Will directly. The sharp, angular lines of his face had softened considerably and the slight furrow of his brow hinted at deeper feelings of concern that he seldom voiced aloud. The notion of a man like Hannibal Lecter expressing any real degree of concern for another person would have been almost laughable if not for the sincerity hiding behind his honey gaze. Will's heart practically melted at the sight. This was only for *him*.

"I believe that I may have pushed you past your limits tonight," Hannibal admitted.

"Yeah, well," Will sighed. "I didn't know what my limits were until tonight." He glanced back down at the plug in his hand, now still and silent. Somehow, the entire thing felt even stickier than before, so after stepping around Hannibal to approach the sink, Will reached for the silver handle with his clean hand.

"I should have told you about...this," Will continued as he set about rinsing the remaining lube from the toy. "Though, the whole point of keeping this from you was because I wanted to surprise you with it." Will lifted his hand and an automatic soap dispenser deposited a small amount of foam into his open palm.

"And a pleasant surprise it was," Hannibal agreed, stepping closer still. "Tell me, at what point did the stimulation become unbearable for you?"

Will hummed thoughtfully while rubbing his hands together underneath the cool flow of water. He had since dropped the toy into the sink's basin, not really caring what came of it at this point. "Right before the second act," he recalled. "The uh, the toy was pressing into my..." Will trailed off, reluctant to say the word 'prostate'.

"Your prostate?" Hannibal filled in, the barest hint of amusement in his voice. Perhaps Will hadn't unlearned his modesty just yet.

"Um, yeah. Hey, I know that there's probably not much of a point in mentioning this now, but is there anyone else in here with us?" Warily, Will bent down at the waist to peer underneath the other bathroom stalls. From what he could tell, they were all empty. "No, I guess not."

Even if it had turned out that they were not alone, Hannibal had no qualms about continuing their conversation as it was. "Did you feel that you may have been overstimulated?"

Will rose back up to his full height and nodded. "Yeah, definitely. It got to the point where it didn't feel good anymore and I didn't know how to tell you to stop–to actually stop."

Hannibal inclined his head towards Will, appearing thoughtful then. "It would have been wise for us to establish a safeword before this point."

Will chuckled. "Hindsight is twenty-twenty, isn't it? Look, Hannibal," Will let out a quiet sigh, then stepped closer to Hannibal, and gathered the older man's hands up into his own. "I'm not upset with you. If anything, this is more my fault than yours. I just...I wanted to do something spontaneous."

Hannibal nodded, understanding. "Are you still feeling spontaneous, Will?"

Will knew exactly what Hannibal was hinting at, though despite himself, he couldn't hide the cheeky grin that stretched across his face. "Really, Hannibal? What if someone comes in?"

"Then they'll have the pleasure of hearing yours."

Will's mouth fell open in a faux gasp, his expression morphing into one of feigned shock. This entire moment between them felt delightfully playful. "That's quite a bold statement for you to make, Dr.Lecter."

It was Hannibal's turn to grin. "Fortune favors the bold, does it not?"

At that, Will laughed while sliding his arms around Hannibal's waist to pull the taller man's body flush against his own, his hands resting on the divide between Hannibal's shoulder

blades. He tilted his head back and found Hannibal's gaze, mirth meeting mischief. "That it does."

Hannibal leaned down to bury his nose into Will's hair. He could, and sometimes did, become intoxicated from the sweetness of Will’s soft curls and supple skin. He pressed a single kiss to Will's temple before trailing his lips down the side of his face, peppering kisses along his path. When he found Will’s ear, Hannibal began murmuring his reassurances, intent on reminding Will of the reverence he felt–his *adoration*. To further emphasize his point, Hannibal slid his hands down from Will's waist and sought out the fly of his pants. When his fingertips brushed over the smooth, metal button there, he was delighted to find that it was still undone.

"Please," Will breathed, pressing his hips forward and granting his permission for Hannibal to continue. "I've been waiting long enough, Hannibal."

"As have I, Mylimasis." After tugging the zipper down the rest of the way, Hannibal pulled Will's pants down over the swell of his ass. His silky blue undergarments soon followed and within a matter of seconds, both articles of clothing had fallen down to Will's knees, the expensive fabric bunching up around his calves and ankles. A single glance down at Will's crotch revealed that his erection from earlier had barely waned, but Hannibal still reached out to curl his fingers around the stiffening base. All it took were a few long, languid strokes to fill Will's cock back out in its entirety. On the last upstroke, Hannibal gently squeezed the glans between his thumb and his curled index finger, smirking as he watched a clear bead of precum leak out from the tiny slit at the very end. He swiped his thumb over it, smearing the clear fluid across the head of Will's cock until it glistened. After sparing another moment to admire Will's body, Hannibal released Will's cock from his hold.

"Face the wall," he ordered.

Will was all too eager to comply. After turning around and placing his hands on the stall, he arched his back and shuffled to spread his legs apart as wide as the pants around his knees would allow for, intent on putting his ass on full display for Hannibal. Before long, he felt a warm set of hands on each cheek, feeling and kneading the plump flesh.

Behind him, Hannibal suddenly dropped to his knees, his hands never once leaving the firm mounds of Will’s ass. The pads of his fingers dug roughly into the skin as he spread each cheek apart to expose Will’s pretty, pink hole, already wet from the lube he’d used on himself earlier. Hannibal’s head dipped down and his tongue darted out for his first taste of his lover. Starting with the soft sac that hung heavily between Will’s trembling thighs, Hannibal dragged it up slowly, passing over the perineum and ending with the puckered skin of Will's anus. The thin trail of saliva he left in his wake left the skin there feeling cold and a little damp, but the wet coils and delicious flicks of Hannibal’s tongue soon returned and the treatment worked wonders to warm him right back up. Will groaned, falling forward to fold his arms against the stall so he could rest his forehead against them.

“Hush, darling,” Hannibal warned, his breath coming out in a hot puff against the sensitive flesh in front of him. Had his accent gotten heavier as well? It certainly sounded like it had.

Hannibal buried his face between Will’s cheeks once more, his tongue flat as he delved back in to taste Will’s wetness. Above him, Will was helpless to the onslaught of sensation. Before Hannibal, Will would have never imagined that he’d be the type of man who would actually gain any amount of enjoyment from an act as downright filthy as being eaten out, but here he was, holding back a host of undignified noises while Hannibal's wicked tongue licked him open in the bathroom stall at a fucking *opera house* of all places. Just when he thought he couldn't possibly bear it another moment, Hannibal's tongue stiffened before pressing into the center and wriggling. If he could will himself to relax just a little more, Will was almost certain that it would breach into his body. *God*, he kind of wanted it to. Was that fucked up?

Sensing the rising tension in Will's body, Hannibal raised his hand and angled his fingers to press against Will’s pucker, drawing a soft whine out of him.

“No, Hannibal. I-I’m ready,” Will insisted fervently. "Please, I'm ready."

Hannibal withdrew his fingers, but his hand still lingered on Will’s ass. A warning. "Be mindful of your voice."

"I'll mind my voice when you fuck me," Will shot back, a taunt on his beautiful, tempting mouth.

"Greedy boy," Hannibal chided him while rising back to his feet. If their present location didn't hold the potential to be so compromising, he would have entertained the thought of punishing Will for making such a bratty demand of him, but he relented and instead, reached down between their bodies to align the rounded tip of his cock with Will's hole.

“Yes–!” Will gasped out as Hannibal finally–fucking *finally* –pressed home. “Oh, fuck yes." The head slipped inside easily enough.

Will glanced over his shoulder at him and caught the wild heat in Hannibal's eyes. He looked positively ferocious as he grabbed roughly at Will's hips with both hands to pull him backwards onto his cock. The unmistakable sound of skin slapping against wet skin filled the room and echoed back at them. Will moaned at the sensation of being filled so completely, his head falling down between his shoulders. Hannibal's impressive girth always posed a slight challenge for Will's body to accommodate, but the intense pleasure that followed the slight burn of his entry made it more than worth it for him. Hannibal let go of one of Will's hips to thread his fingers through his soft curls and forcefully drag his head back up. His grip was firm and it was all Will could do to bite back a moan. In the distance, Will could hear the muffled sounds of a soprano belting out notes high enough to shatter glass. Oh, if only he could, he would be singing his own praises, but Hannibal's hand had since folded itself over his mouth, stifling every sweet noise that Will couldn't suppress.

Will shuddered following a particularly deep thrust, fresh color flushing across his face. Hannibal's fingers tightened over his mouth before pushing to turn his head to the left, where Will caught the tantalizing image of their reflection in the mirror that hung above the sink. He couldn't help but noticed how absolutely wrecked he looked, but before Will could even think to close his eyes, he felt Hannibal's soft lips press against his ear.

"Do you see how beautiful you are like this, my darling boy? You're so close. I can feel it," Hannibal whispered. His rich, accented voice felt like a warm caress on Will's senses. "Keep your eyes open for me."

Will tried. *God*, did he try, but his eyes were dark, the deep blue rimming the black pupil in a fine line. Even the fluorescent lights above them felt as though they were too harsh, but he didn't want to disappoint Hannibal. Instead, Will squinted against the artificial lighting and focused on the lower half of the mirror, where he watched the way Hannibal's hips thrusted forward against him, over and over again in rapid succession. It felt so easy for him to get lost in the motions of it all. He would see the briefest flash of Hannibal's cock, thick and long, before it disappeared inside him. In front of him, Will's own cock jutted out from between his thighs, thoroughly engorged and bouncing from the force of Hannibal's body against his own. Then, it stilled and disappeared from his view, but that was only because Hannibal had reached down to curl a loose fist around the base. Tears prickled at the corners of Will's eyes as an intense pressure began welling up inside of him. He was so close–oh so *very* close. Nothing in this moment existed aside from Hannibal–his body, his breath, his cock. A fire alarm could go off and all Will's mind would be able to comprehend was *Hannibal*. It almost felt as though he was being devoured and consumed whole, but in the best way imaginable.

Will couldn't have picked out any singular word or action that ultimately pushed him over the edge, but when he came, it was with a shuddering cry that would have been heard far outside of the bathroom if not for Hannibal's hand muffling it. His body clenched and tightened around Hannibal, pulling him deep into that wonderful abyss right alongside him. From within the mirror, he watched Hannibal's pleasure unfold around him and committed the image of his bliss to memory. Somewhere beyond the sex-fueled haze in his mind, he was vaguely aware of their location and the fact that the only place his release could have landed was against the wall in front of him, but Will couldn't find it within himself to care.

Through the thick, heady musk of sex hanging in the air around them, a familiar scent soon wafted through and made itself known to Hannibal. Though it was subtle, he could still discern a few of the more prominent notes; warm vanilla, a spicy cinnamon, and sweet cranberries with an underlying hint of apple.

Lounds.

The scent was unmistakably that of her perfume, but it was faint. Much too faint, in fact. From this, Hannibal deduced that the unscrupulous journalist herself couldn’t have been present here with them, but whoever was must have recently been around her.

How curious. It seemed that there really was merit behind her claims of being in contact with an informant.

Hannibal’s decision to remain silent while he withdrew his softening cock from Will’s body was a strategic one. Will wasn’t yet aware of their voyeur’s presence and Hannibal needed to maintain the façade of blissful ignorance long enough to confront them before an inevitable sense of skittishness set in for their unexpected guest. After tucking himself away and adjusting his suit, Hannibal rested his hand on Will’s hip and rubbed slow, soothing circles into the skin there for just a moment longer. He lowered his head to bury his nose into the

dark crown of Will's curls, but his eyes didn't fall shut. He couldn't allow himself to fully savor the sweet scent of his lover's post orgasmic bliss. He couldn't relish in the sensation of Will's spent body falling slack against his own. The moment had spoiled, Will's scent had become soured by the intrusion of Freddie's perfume, and when Hannibal peeked through the narrow crack in the bathroom stall, he discovered the reason behind why.

Franklyn.

He'd suspected as much, though without any formal evidence to pit against him, Hannibal couldn't have made any legitimate accusations. While Franklyn's neurosis was severe, his patient file hadn't alluded to stalking attempts of this magnitude and in light of recent events, Hannibal was beginning to deeply regret the mercy he'd shown Franklyn in the weeks prior. If it weren't for Will's presence, Hannibal wouldn't have hesitated in taking action to remedy this troublesome lapse in his judgment. Although it displeased him greatly to know this, Hannibal silently acknowledged to himself that for the time-being, it was necessary for him to spare Franklyn's life. With a faint sigh, Hannibal pressed one final kiss to the top of Will's head before pulling away from him. The swiftness of his movements was nearly inhuman as he unlocked the door to the bathroom stall and opened it just enough to reveal only himself. Behind him, Will still appeared to be quite disheveled and by this point, it was only a matter of time before he regained full control of his faculties and realized what was going on.

"Hello, Franklyn," Although his voice held its usual coolness to it, the dark gleam in Hannibal's eyes offered a glimpse into his true feelings.

Clearly not expecting to have been caught, Franklyn's eyes grew wide, his face paled, and his ears flushed a deep, hot red. "D-Dr.Lecter," he stuttered out. He nearly stumbled with how quickly he tried to step back.

The intrusion of an unfamiliar voice sobered Will completely. A loud rustling noise soon sounded from behind Hannibal as Will scrambled to pull himself together enough to, at the very least, restore his decency or what was now left of it anyhow. Oh, *God*. Someone had wandered in here with them while they were fucking–someone that Hannibal apparently *knew*. Going into this, Will had been perfectly aware of the potential risks they were taking and of course, the odds never seemed to be in his favor. Will did his best to steel his nerves as he stepped up beside Hannibal and looked back at their voyeur, completely flummoxed and not entirely sure he hadn't passed out somewhere and wasn't presently having some sort of absurd dream. Then, his eyes fell to the phone in the man's hand before widening.

Not only was its camera application pulled up, the tiny, red square at the bottom indicated to him that it was actively *recording*.

No, this couldn't possibly be a dream. This was a *nightmare* and a cruel rendering of one at that.

When he finally managed to tear his gaze away from the phone, Will turned to Hannibal. "Who is this?" It was less of a question and more of a demand.

Hannibal's response came quickly. "His name is Franklyn. He is a former patient of mine."

Will swallowed thickly and opened his mouth to speak, but nothing came out. In that moment, a rush of realizations flooded through his mind, granting him the clarity that he'd been so desperately seeking out over the past two weeks. All of the previously scattered bits and pieces of information finally fell into place and arranged themselves into a comprehensive image. Panic, humiliation, and fear raged through him as he realized what this meant. This was that short, stout figure of a man from earlier. This man, Franklyn, couldn't be anyone other than Hannibal's stalker. He was the one who had taken those pictures of them. He was the driving force behind Freddie's article,

Hannibal squared his shoulders and took a step closer to Franklyn. "Do you care to explain why you've come in here with us?"

Franklyn's entire body stiffened, defensive. "I was just–um. I-I mean, this is a bathroom, so…"

"Do you often record yourself while you're in the bathroom?" Hannibal asked, his knowing gaze flicking down to the phone in Franklyn's hand. Even now, it was still recording.

The bright red flush on Franklyn's face deepened as he stammered out an answer. "I–what? No, no! I don't–this really is not what you think."

"Then I'm curious to hear what this is."

As Franklyn stuttered his way through a list of increasingly poor excuses, Will felt a surge of anger toiling through his body that, if he wasn't careful, would give way to ideations that really would land him in front of a more conventional psychiatrist, or worse yet, the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. His strongest feeling just then was one of reproach. How *dare* this man insert himself into their personal life and private affairs? Will felt exposed. *Violated. Humiliated*. He wanted to scream.

Will's lips then pressed together in a thin line and something dark flashed across his eyes. To anyone else, Will would have appeared rather disconcerted and understandably so, but Hannibal recognized that subtle glint of ferocity lurking within him. There was a hint of danger hidden just below the surface and it echoed against his own instincts; a suppressed rage that, with the proper guidance, could be molded and transformed into something beautiful. Will was nowhere near ready to fully embrace his darker tendencies, but these little glimpses of them made Hannibal's ravenous heart soar with delight. Oh, what he wouldn't give in this moment to finally bear witness to Will's becoming, but the time was not yet right. The tension was thick. He could taste it in the air between them, just as palpable as Franklyn's fear and vulnerability. An eerie silence fell upon them.

A calm before the storm.

Without warning, Will lunged forward and forcibly pried Franklyn's phone out of his hands. Every inflamed fiber of his being was urging him to just smash the damned thing to bits. A darker part of himself wanted him to snap Franklyn's neck, but he refused to acknowledge it. His fingers gripped tightly at the edges, his knuckles turning white as he yanked the phone back and moved quickly to place some distance between Franklyn and himself. The footage

had to be deleted and beyond that, he needed to ensure that an extra copy of it wasn't being stored somewhere within a cloud.

Franklyn attempted to step forward and snatch his phone back for himself. Will was having none of it. "Don't you dare come any fucking closer to me," he spat.

"It's my phone!" Franklyn insisted while reaching out again.

Will's response was to lift the phone up even higher above his head. His actions were akin to a schoolyard bully withholding a toy or another precious item from their victim except in this instance, his reasons for doing so were soundly justified. "I don't give a shit. You'll get it back after I delete the recording you took of us."

At this point, Franklyn was practically hyperventilating. "Can you please just give me a moment? I can explain. I really didn't–can I please have my phone back!?" Again, Franklyn moved to approach Will, but his movements were halted by a firm hand on his chest.

"Franklyn, please stay where you are," Hannibal advised him. "I cannot condone Will's actions any more than yours, but this is something that needs to be done."

Franklyn's expression soured. "Oh, don't give me that! Condone? You really want to stand there and talk about what you do or do not condone? Well, I don't condone therapists sleeping with their patients and yet here you are."

Hannibal quirked a brow at the shorter man. "Will is not my patient, Franklyn. I would never make advances on a patient and your insistence that I do is abhorrent."

"Oh, so he just meets with you every Thursday night at seven for fun then? For more of that!" Franklyn gestured broadly in the direction of the stall Hannibal and Will had emerged from.

"Sometimes, yes," Hannibal confirmed, feeling completely unashamed.

Franklyn gawked back at Hannibal, his mouth agape. "I cannot believe you."

"Will is my partner and what we choose to do together is of no concern to you," Hannibal countered.

"You're the ones who were having sex in a public bathroom!" Franklyn argued.

"Yeah, and you're the fucking creep who decided to record it!" Will shot back from over his shoulder. "Were you going to try selling this to Freddie Lounds too?"

"What? No! That wasn't what I was doing!" Franklyn insisted.

Hannibal chimed back in. "Then, what was the purpose behind you recording Will and myself? Did you intend to keep it for personal use?"

Mortified, Franklyn's eyes fell to the floor. "I–oh God, no! No, I swear it's not like that!"

“Perhaps this behavior is something you should discuss with your new therapist, Franklyn. Sexual deviancy to this extent is a cause for concern and if the trend continues, you may very well find yourself in legal trouble," Hannibal suggested, decidedly ignoring his own deviancy and knowing full well that Franklyn was already going to be facing a number of legal consequences for his actions.

"Oh my God, no! It's really not like that! I'm not a sexual deviant! I don't like this sort of thing! This isn’t even for me!”

"If not for you, then who is it for, Franklyn?"

If only for that one detail, Franklyn was determined to stand his ground. "I-I'm not at liberty to say."

Hannibal opened his mouth to respond, but fell silent when Will reentered his line of view.

"Here. Take your fucking phone," Will hissed through gritted teeth while roughly tossing the phone down onto the tiled floor by Franklyn’s feet, not caring if the device actually survived the fall. Without another word, Will turned on his heels and stormed out of the bathroom, leaving Hannibal and an incredibly flustered Franklyn behind.

Hannibal only spared a few seconds to regard Franklyn with a tense look before following after him.

Chapter End Notes

Bumper sticker idea: The Chesapeake Ripper is real and he ate my whole ass at the opera.

Fate

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

With the door to the bathroom swinging shut behind him, Will ran.

Panic rippled through him in waves, each one more powerful than the last. They were relentless as they crashed over him and flooded his mind with a surge of racing thoughts.

His panic attack had come onto him swiftly. So swiftly, in fact, that he hadn't even fully registered it until the first rush of cold air hit his lungs. When he finally stopped running, he found himself somewhere in the parking lot, standing gobsmacked between a flickering street lamp and a modest sedan with a dent marring the rear fender.

Hannibal caught up to him quickly enough. "Will, come with me." Hannibal approached Will slowly, as though the younger man was a skittish animal that would bolt at the slightest hint of danger, and attempted to drape his coat across Will's shoulders.

Hannibal's voice sounded distant, but when Will felt that first brush across his shoulder, he flinched. He opened his mouth to protest as well, but the words died on his tongue. He was far too flummoxed to say anything at all.

"Wait here, Will. I won't be long." After giving the coat one final tug around Will's body, Hannibal reluctantly left Will standing where he was while he headed off to fetch his car from the valet.

A few minutes later, Will heard the low rumble of the Bentley's engine and even as Hannibal guided him to sit in the passenger seat, Will did not feel as though his mind was present with the rest of his body. The door was shut gently beside him, but the sound of it latching into place hardly registered in his ears. As Hannibal pulled out of the parking lot and set off down the highway, Will stared blankly out the window for what felt like an eternity before the older man's voice eventually broke through the static noise in his mind.

"We should discuss what happened," Hannibal suggested, speaking slowly so as to not expose the uncertainty he felt. The topic was an exceedingly difficult one for him to broach and for once in his career, Hannibal found himself at a loss. Given how outrageous the circumstances were, he didn't know how to properly address the situation with Will.

Will rubbed his eyes and blinked at Hannibal as if in a daze. He sat in contemplative silence for another long moment before finally rediscovering his own voice. "That man back there...did you know that he was stalking you? Before all of this?"

"Not to this extent," Hannibal answered carefully.

Will glanced beside himself. His jaw was set tightly. "Well, what does that mean? Why am I only just now finding out about him?" Somewhere within the befuddled haze of his mind, a

tiny voice of reason spoke up to remind him of the laws that existed to protect doctor-patient confidentiality, but he decidedly ignored it in favor of feeding into his festering outrage.

“Franklyn was referred to me by another provider for his severe neurosis,” Hannibal explained. “He has a tendency to focus too much on his therapist and not enough on his therapy, which is why he was originally referred to me. During the time I was attempting to treat him, I found that, much like with his other providers, he was taking too much interest in me as an individual and not as his therapist, so I made the decision to give him a referral as well.”

Will nodded slowly. “When was this?”

“Several weeks ago.”

“And what exactly was he doing that caused you to give him a referral?”

“He ignored my role as his therapist and instead tried to earn my favor as his friend. I did make an attempt at clarifying this with him, but he was not receptive to it, hence my decision to refer him. I have a log detailing his more concerning behaviors. You may look over it if you wish,” Hannibal offered.

Will blew out a long, exasperated sigh. “Look over it and do what, exactly? I think we’re past the point of checking over patient files, Hannibal. God,” Will leaned forward in his seat to bury his shame-covered face into his hands. "This is fucking humiliating..."

“Perhaps to an extent, but we are not without recourse,” Hannibal reminded him.

At that, Will huffed out a short laugh. His hands fell from his face and into his lap as he straightened his back out. “Look, I understand perfectly well that in reality, we’re not innocent here. We decided to have sex in a public area. We knew the risks and took our chances anyway. And guess what? Someone found us. We'll be lucky if we don't end up culpable for public indecency, but...that’s not really my concern here. We've reached the point of absurdity in all of this, Hannibal. The stalking, Freddie’s article…can nothing between us be private anymore?”

“I understand your frustration. I am–”

"It's frustrating to all hell, Hannibal! If Franklyn tries to come near us one more time, I–” Will cut Hannibal off before cutting himself off as well. “I can’t do this again. I don’t want to do this. I-I–” his voice wavered and wobbled, as though he was on the verge of tears. His earlier panic, humiliation, and rage had resurfaced for a second wave and it was all Will could do to dampen its impact.

“It’s alright, Will. You are more than justified in feeling the way you do,” Hannibal was swift to provide his reassurance, but beneath it all, he could sense that Will was grappling with something that ran much deeper within himself–that very same inclination towards darkness. He noted, with something akin to disappointment, how fragile Will’s current state of mind was because while this would be the perfect opportunity for him to nurture Will’s suppressed instincts, any attempt at doing so would be futile with how exceptionally high his anxiety

was. Instead, Hannibal settled for removing his right hand from the steering wheel and rested it over a clenched fist. “What Franklyn did to us was unspeakably rude. Now, what else is to be done about that? You know that I have been discussing this matter with a lawyer. You deleted the recording Franklyn took of us. We have already taken care of our most pressing issues and since the footage no longer exists, there is nothing for Franklyn to hand over to Freddie Lounds.”

“The footage still exists,” Will revealed, sounding just as exhausted as he looked.

Genuine surprise crossed Hannibal’s face then and Will only managed to catch a fleeting glimpse of it through the Bentley’s rear view mirror.

“I have it,” Will went on to explain. “I sent the recording to my phone before deleting it off of Franklyn’s. I figure if anyone should have this, it should be us."

“Holy. Shit.” Beverly slapped her hand against the table, the half-empty glasses around them clattering and clinking with the force of the impact. She leaned in closer, trying (and subsequently failing) to contain her boisterous laughter. It bubbled out of her loud enough to draw more than a few curious glances from the other bar patrons seated around them. “No fucking way! Oh my God. I just–I can’t. That’s insane!”

Will shot her a pointed look from across the table, annoyance flashing across his narrowed eyes. “I’m not trying to tell the whole bar what happened, so quiet down, yeah?” Will hissed before sinking back into his seat with a loud huff, his shoulders slumping downward as he stared fixedly at the empty glasses of whiskey in front of him. His willingness to confide in his colleagues might have been helped by more than a bit of liquid courage, but he was beginning to regret his decision to open his mouth at all.

Both Brian and Jimmy exchanged furtive glances with one another. A beat passed between them before Jimmy nodded and it was only then that Brian leaned in towards Will to finally speak up. “Alright, let’s backtrack this a bit, yeah? Start from the beginning and you, Bev,” Brian’s gaze momentarily shifted from Will to Beverly. “Are going to stay quiet until he’s finished.”

In turn, Beverly rolled her eyes and picked her drink up from the table, lifting the straw up to her mouth for another sip of the fruity concoction within.

Will sighed, allowing his head to fall back against the seat while he drew in a deep breath to calm himself and collect his thoughts. Given the sensitive nature of what had happened on the night of the opera, there were more than a few intimate details that he felt should be omitted entirely. A few seconds later, Will’s eyes blinked open and he lifted his head back up, having settled upon a careful string of words to use for his story. “Okay, fine. Fine, but none of what I’m about to say leaves this room, alright? If I hear anything from Jack or Alana about this, the only conversations I will be having with any of you in the future will be strictly work-related.”

“Our lips are sealed,” Brian assured and at that, Will was met with a series of collective nods from the others around him.

“So,” Will began, doubling down on his decision to speak against his better judgment. “This last Friday, Hannibal took me out to the opera. When we got there, he ordered us drinks. I met a few of his friends and we found our seats in the theater. The first act started and we sat through it, but before the second act, we decided to head off to the bathroom and…you know,” Will trailed off and made a vague gesture with his hand.

“Fuck,” Brian filled in.

“You know, you have such a way with words. It’s poetic, really,” Will deadpanned. “But… yeah, essentially. Well, I didn’t know it at the time and neither did Hannibal, but in the middle of us…doing our thing, someone came into the bathroom.”

“I mean, it was a public bathroom,” Jimmy commented.

Will only paused long enough to let out a low huff. “Well,” he continued, ignoring Jimmy and placing more emphasis on the word than necessary. “Come to find out, the person who caught us was one of Hannibal’s former patients.”

“Oh shi–” Beverly went to speak, but as soon as she opened her mouth, Will cut her off and hushed her by holding up a single index finger.

“Hold on. I’m almost done,” he said. “When he found us, this former patient of his took out his phone and started recording us.”

There was a long pause and then Will sighed. “Alright, now I’m done.”

“Damn, what a freak. I take it he’s Hannibal’s stalker as well?” Beverly asked.

“You got it,” Will nodded. “Hannibal referred him to another therapist a few weeks back and I guess the guy didn’t take it all too well. He’s kind of obsessed with Hannibal.”

“Only kind of?”

“Alright, yeah. Completely obsessed with Hannibal. It was the whole reason Hannibal gave him a referral.”

“So, what happened next? How did you guys figure out he was there?” Beverly was practically on the edge of her seat.

“Hannibal was the one who noticed him first,” Will explained. “And I didn’t even realize he was there until after Hannibal started confronting him.”

“So, he’s the same guy who took those pictures of you a couple of weeks ago? The one who gave those pictures to Freddie Lounds?” Beverly asked.

Will hummed in affirmation. “Mmhm. He’s upset that Hannibal rejected him and when he found out that Hannibal and I were together, his jealousy took hold of him. Hannibal told me that he had been treating him for neurosis, so you can imagine how we got to this point with him.”

“Do…do you think he’s going to try and recover the footage somehow?” Beverly’s concern was written clearly across her face with her knitted brows and slight frown.

Will shook his head. “I made sure to go into his iCloud account to delete the video from there as well, so unless he had a third backup account or another device on him, the footage doesn’t exist anymore.” It was a careful lie. A copy of the footage did still exist and only two people were in possession of it; Hannibal and Will himself.

“Look, all I’m saying is, if worse comes to absolute worst and you guys are going to have a sex tape out there, you may as well be profiting off of it. I mean, if you want to get real technical here, not only would it be gay porn, but it’s public gay porn and you guys were caught. That covers, like, three whole porn categories in one video.”

“More than that,” Brian spoke up, his eyes sparkling with amusement. “Hannibal’s older than Will, so you could add the whole ‘older man younger man’ trope in there too. Oh! You know what? Hannibal is European, so that means that he’s probably uncut. There’s your fifth porn category.”

“Don’t forget, Hannibal’s a doctor too. There’s one more,” Jimmy added.

Beverly laughed. “Ooh, psychoanalyze me, daddy,” she joked.

Will rolled his eyes and wondered to himself why he’d even agreed to have this absurd conversation in the first place. A single glance down at the empty glasses of whiskey reminded him of the answer. “I can’t believe I’m having this conversation with you guys.”

Beverly only chuckled again. “Come on, Will. It’s good to be able to laugh at yourself every now and again. How else are we supposed to cope with it all? Our jobs, the situation with Hannibal’s stalker…life can’t always be so serious.”

Will fiddled with one of the glasses and sighed. “Yeah, I suppose you’re right.” He reached behind himself to fish his wallet out of his back pocket and pulled a few bills out before tossing them down onto the table. From there, he brought out his phone and shot a text off to Hannibal.

[11:53] Is it too late to ask for a ride home?

[11:55] Of course not. Where are you?

Beverly glanced beside herself at Will. “Where are you heading off to?”

Much to her surprise, a mischievous grin broke out across Will’s face as he turned to leave. “To be psychoanalyzed.”

“Good evening, Will,” Hannibal opened the door to his office and purposefully greeted Will with the same air of polite professionalism that he typically reserved for his patients. He then made a show of glancing down at his watch before fixing Will with an admonishing look. “You’re late to your appointment.”

A sly glint came to Will's eye then, as if he was about to say something mischievous. "Dr.Lecter," he practically purred out Hannibal's title. "I'm really sorry about that. Is there any way you can still see me this evening?" As he spoke, Will tried his best to adopt an apologetic expression, but he ended up looking more playful than genuinely remorseful.

Through what was undoubtedly years of practice, Hannibal maintained a neutral expression. "If you're going to be tardy, it's considered a courtesy to give the other person proper notice. To forgo this courtesy is terribly rude. Do you have a reason for being this late, Will?"

If only for show, Will breathed a regretful sigh. "I've been daydreaming again," he admitted. "I got lost in my head for a little too long. If it's not too much trouble," Will took a step closer to Hannibal with a small grin. "I'd like to talk to you about it."

True to his role, Hannibal paused as if to consider Will's request, but both men already knew what his decision was going to be. "Very well," Hannibal stepped back and allowed Will the space to enter his office. "We can still have our session, but please do not make a habit out of this."

"Thank you, doctor," Will brushed past Hannibal and set his sights on that same set of black leather chairs in the center of the room. It was a Thursday evening and a single glance over at the clock that hung on the far wall revealed that Will was a full twenty-five minutes late to his usual seven o' clock appointment. While some of this was intentional on his part, Will also couldn't resist playing into his role a bit more than he originally intended. He wanted to add that extra touch of realism to Hannibal's.

Will sunk down into the same seat he'd sat in countless times over and watched as Hannibal gracefully eased himself into the chair opposite of him. The front button to his suit jacket–yet another perfectly bespoke piece with a print that could nearly be considered gaudy if not for the man wearing it–was undone with a quick, pinching motion. Briefly, Will wondered to himself just how many suits Hannibal kept on rotation because it seemed that no matter how frequently they spent time together, Hannibal seldom ever wore the same outfit twice.

"It seems that your daydreams have started to interfere with your life to a greater extent," Hannibal observed, drawing Will out of his silent musings and back into the present moment with him. "May I ask what you think about when you're in this state?"

"You," Will confessed. "I think about you."

"In a positive light, I would hope."

"Oh, very much so," Will agreed, smirking a bit. "I have to say, I hold a certain…sentiment towards you, Dr.Lecter."

Just then, Hannibal moved to cross one leg over the other, right folding over left. "Is this sentiment romantic in nature?"

Will nodded. "Partially, but…there's a bit more to it than that."

"Do you desire me sexually?"

At that, Will felt a tickle of humor bubble up in his throat, a hearty laugh that he only just barely managed to suppress. When he and Hannibal had discussed trying out a bit of roleplay, he never anticipated how difficult it would actually be for him to stay in character. “That’s quite a personal question to ask someone,” he managed.

Hannibal appeared thoughtful then, as though he was actually mulling Will’s statement over in his mind. “Yes, but it regards me as well, so I believe it’s also a fair question to ask in this instance.”

“Am I allowed to plead the fifth?” Will asked jokingly.

It was then Hannibal’s turn to hide his amusement. Though, Will still caught the slight crinkling at the outer edges of his eyes. “This is my office, Will, not a courtroom. Unlike a court of law, I am not going to judge or condemn you for sharing your honest feelings here with me.”

Will finally gave in to himself and chuckled. “Is this an elaborate way of you asking me to share my fantasies with you, doctor?”

“My original request was for you to tell me what you think about while you’re daydreaming,” Hannibal corrected him. “Ambiguity is not constructive in matters of problem solving. Tell me, Will, do you–”

“Hannibal,” Will cut him off, choosing to break character in that moment.

A beat of silence passed between them before Hannibal spoke next. “Yes, Will?”

“I know you a bit too well by now to fall for that trick. You’re not going to sit there and rope me into an actual therapy session with you. At least, not today, you aren’t. Now,” Will lifted his gaze and locked eyes with Hannibal while reaching up to the collar of his shirt to begin undoing the first few buttons there. “Let’s discuss what I came here for, Dr.Lecter.” With the low and sultry cadence of his voice, Will had effectively fallen back into his role as Hannibal’s infatuated patient.

In place of a defeated huff, Hannibal merely smiled. Should he have felt slighted by Will calling him out just then? Perhaps, but Hannibal found that he didn’t feel that way at all. In fact, he didn’t even feel the barest hint of ire within himself. Slowly but surely, he was allowing Will to know him–to *see* him–and the knowledge that the younger man was keen enough to dismantle him in a matter of seconds only reinforced his decision to keep pursuing Will Graham as though he was still trying to earn his affection in the first place.

“Yes, of course. Would you care to tell me what your daydreams consist of?” Hannibal asked, recalling an earlier session where he’d asked Will to do the same. That time around, however, their discussion held more sincerity behind it, though it was still quite playful, just as this one was.

Feeling pleased with himself, Will smiled a bit too smugly and dropped his hands from his shirt to the armrests on either side of his chair. “I often find myself thinking about you. I can’t help it, really. I’ve never known myself as well as I know myself when I’m with you. You’ve

become a permanent fixture in my life and there isn’t a day that passes by where I don’t think about you as you are now. You’ve consumed me in a way that I haven’t experienced with anyone else and I want to know you on a more intimate level, Han–Dr.Lecter.”

“That’s quite a rare gift,” Hannibal replied. “Why do you believe that I should give it to you?”

“Because I want it,” Will answered. “Haven’t I proven myself enough?”

Hannibal’s first instinct was to tell Will no, that he wasn’t adequately prepared to know him in his entirety, but the potential for his becoming was still there, simmering inside of him like a delicate dish that only Hannibal’s careful hand would be able to transform into something that could truly be considered beautiful.

Instead, Hannibal settled for a much simpler answer–one that would escalate this silly game of pretend into what they both wanted. "You have, haven't you?"

In lieu of words, Will's hands returned to his shirt. Nimble fingers worked quickly on the remaining buttons, revealing the smooth expanse of pale flesh that rested beneath it all.

Before Will could move to slide the shirt off of his body, Hannibal called out to him. "Come here, darling."

Will obeyed. He stood from his seat and came to a stop right before Hannibal. It was only then that he shrugged off his shirt the rest of the way, leaving his upper body bare. How many times had Hannibal seen Will's body like this? A hundred? A thousand? Regardless of where the answer actually lied, it didn't matter. For as long as he was permitted to bear witness to it, Will's beauty will continue to inspire awe within him.

Will's hands went to his jeans next. Within a matter of seconds, the button was undone and the zipper was pulled down. He paused to make eye contact and allowed them to drop, the pale blue fabric pooling around his ankles. Hannibal's eyebrows rose in mild surprise.

Will had chosen to forego any sort of undergarments and his cock was achingly *hard*.

Hannibal only allowed Will enough time to step out of his jeans before reaching out and tugging him closer. Deft fingers roamed across Will's supple skin, mapping out the curves and planes of his body. He leaned in and pressed a soft kiss to the center of Will's chest before moving to capture a nipple between his teeth and tongue. He licked and laved at the delicate, pink flesh until he felt it harden under his touch. With a soft nibble, Hannibal pulled away before giving the same treatment to the other nipple. Will hissed out in pleasure at the sensation of it.

Without warning, Hannibal hooked his arms around Will's waist and hoisted him up whilst rising from his chair. Will gasped out in surprise at the sudden feeling of weightlessness, but groaned when his back made contact with the cool surface of Hannibal's desk. From there, Hannibal situated himself between Will's thighs. His hands came down to grope at the two firm mounds of flesh that made up Will's ass, spreading them apart and exposing his hole to the room. "Do I need to prepare you?"

Will shook his head. "I'm ready, Hannibal. Please."

Hannibal only spared enough time to relieve the pressure on his straining cock by withdrawing it from his pants while his free hand retrieved a bottle of lube of the top drawer of his desk. Will readied himself by hooking each of his legs over Hannibal's shoulders and soon felt the other man lining the head of his cock up with his hole. Will's body welcomed him inside, eager to feel that familiar sensation of fullness within himself. His head fell back against the desktop, his eyes fluttering shut and his mouth falling open in a gasp that didn't need to be silenced. Hannibal sighed contentedly at the sight of such bliss on Will's face.

Oh, but he wanted to watch that bliss morph into raw, unbridled passion before long. As a courtesy, his first few thrusts were slow, easing Will into the punishing pace he intended to set. And Will, the darling thing he was, met Hannibal with a fervor of his own. He took all that he was willing to give and then some, demanding the pleasure that he knew only Hannibal would be able to bring him.

"God, Hannibal. Fuck–" Will's plea was cut short by the sound of the phone ringing, an abrupt chime that filled the room once, then twice more before Hannibal silenced it by picking up the device and pressing the button to accept the call. "Hello?" His thumb moved across the keypad once more and the phone was then put on speaker.

An unfortunately familiar voice soon sounded through, though Hannibal already knew who it was based off of the caller ID and had decided to answer it anyways. "Hello, Dr.Lecter? It's Jack Crawford. Do you have a few minutes? I need to speak with you."

"I can spare the time."

At that, Will shot him a questioning look, but otherwise remained quiet. That was, of course, until Hannibal resumed his thrusts, now more slow and sensual than with the same, fevered intensity they had before. Will attempted to muffle the sounds of his pleasure by biting into his fist, but Hannibal was having none of it. With his free hand, Hannibal grabbed Will's wrist and yanked it above it his head, pinning it somewhere between a lamp and a knickknack. Will knew better than to make any attempt at stifling himself with his other hand. The end result would be the same.

"Great. Listen, it's about a case. I'm going to need to call Will as soon as I get off the phone with you. Or, is Will with you now?"

"No," Hannibal lied. "He's not with me."

There was an unusually long pause before Jack spoke next and Will could have sworn that he *knew*–that he could hear the obscene sound of skin rubbing and sliding against slick skin and was merely choosing to ignore it. Oh, *God*. This was humiliating and yet Will's cock was still standing just as hard between his thighs, leaking just as much if not *more* precum out onto his abdomen. And Hannibal's own cock was still *throbbing* inside of him. Shameful heat bloomed over Will's cheeks, but he made no move to stop any of it.

"Well, we have a body and we're pretty confident it's courtesy of the Maestro. We already have an ID on it and it's someone in connection with you, so I just wanted to check in and see

what you knew," Jack went on to explain. "I'm assuming you knew a man by the name of Franklyn Froideveaux?"

"Ah," Will clamped his jaw shut and swallowed down the noise of surprise that threatened to escape him just then. As if that task wasn't difficult enough on its own, Hannibal rolled his hips forward just so, the head of his cock passing over Will's prostate in the process. Will only just barely managed to stifle a whimper.

"Yes, I did," Hannibal confirmed, his voice sounding unusually even despite the physical exertion of his body. "He was my patient at one point in time."

Seemingly unfazed or perhaps unaware of what was happening on the other end of the line, Jack continued. "And you had a lawsuit open against him? For stalking?"

"Yes. He took the photographs that were later used in the article Ms.Lounds wrote about Will and myself some months ago."

Jack hummed in understanding. "Ah, I see. I don't suppose you know anyone who was close to him during his life? Any friends? Colleagues?"

"While he was my patient, he had mentioned a man he considered his best friend–Tobias Budge. I believe he owns a string shop in Baltimore," Hannibal offered.

"Good to know, thanks. That was all I needed. Tell Will to call me."

Before either Hannibal or Will could comment on Jack's closing statement, the line fell flat.

Hannibal didn't allow Will the time to feel the mortification that was inevitably going to set in once all of this was over. Before the phone was even hung back onto its receiver, Hannibal had resumed thrusting into Will with the same intensity as before, as though Jack had never called in the first place. The sudden spike in sensation, and the subsequent pleasure that came from it, caught Will off guard and before he knew it, that pleasure was consuming him in its entirety, spilling out of his cock and judging by the rhythmic pulsing from within his body, out of Hannibal's as well.

As soon as Hannibal pulled out, his lips were on Will's. He pressed kisses to Will's cheeks, jaw, and throat. There were a multitude of things they would need to discuss once Will found his way back to reality, but for now, Hannibal relished in the fact that Will was here with him, sated and beautifully serene as he was. As for Franklyn, Hannibal felt that he met a fate fitting of his unspeakable rudeness.

Chapter End Notes

Fun story associated with the second scene in this chapter: Months ago, I was supposed to go out on a date with someone who works as a therapist for a living. When I told my roommate about them, they joked that I should tell my date to “psychoanalyze me,

daddy”. To make a long story short, my date ended up rejecting me before we even got the chance to meet, so Franklyn, my man, I know how you feel.

Bonus Chapter: TattleCrime Comment Section

Chapter Notes

> This is a scene that I wrote out, but never ended up adding to the main story because I felt it was a little *too* silly. I say that as though everything I write isn't silly, but if anyone's in the mood for some humor, that is primarily what this little bit is. I won't be adding anymore to the story after this, so consider it completed.

[07:03] **MarylandMayhem:** first

[07:13] **crimejunkie42:** Why am I not surprised?

> *[07:29]* replyto: "crimejunkie42"

The_Real_Will_Graham: you wish that was you, huh?

>> *[07:34]* replyto: "The_Real_Will_Graham"

crimejunkie42: Yeah, no. I can't get behind any of this. Do you not see how problematic this is?? Will is Hannibal's patient and Hannibal probably used Will's trust to take advantage of him. I hope he gets investigated over this. For all we know, Will isn't the first person he's done this to.

>>> *[07:41]* replyto: "crimejunkie42"

RipperApologist: If you hate dilfs, just say that. I'd fold immediately if my psychiatrist looked like that.

>>> *[07:48]* replyto: "crimejunkie42"

LecterLover: Hannibal could take advantage of me any day.

! This comment has been flagged for: potentially explicit language

>>> *[07:59]* > replyto: "crimejunkie42"

The_Real_Will_Graham: jealousy is a disease. get well soon bitch xoxo

>>>> *[08:02]* replyto: "The_Real_Will_Graham"

crimejunkie42: You're not actually Will Graham stfu

>>> *[08:21]* replyto: “crimejunkie42”

shriker: woww these comments smh. pretty privilege is real huh?

>>>> *[08:29]* replyto: “shriker”

crimejunkie42: Honestly.

! This comment has been flagged for: potentially explicit language

[07:15] **bl00dyantlers:** yooo this is lowkey kind of creepy. they’re at his house for fuck’s sake. did you follow this guy home just to take pictures of them??

> *[07:16]* replyto: “bl00dyantlers”

murdermaker: whoever did needs to get a life fr

> *[07:21]* replyto: “bl00dyantlers”

murdermaker: dude can’t even kiss his man on his own property

[07:23] **tastythots:** A Bentley?? Girl, leave Will Graham alone. He’s securing the bag. I know a sugar daddy when I see one.

> *[7:27]* replyto: “tastythots”

iamcannibal: RIGHT

> *[7:28]* replyto: “tastythots”

iamcannibal: I wish I could find a sugar daddy that hot

[07:29] **parischilton: @fredricalounds** So…what happened next? Where are the rest of the pictures?

> *[7:33]* replyto: “parischilton”

The_Real_Will_Graham: the hub

> *[7:39]* replyto: "parischilton"

chesapeakestripper: Idk probably on the bird app

>> *[7:42]* replyto: "chesapeakestripper"

ForensicFreak: Who do you think tops?

>>> *[7:44]* replyto: "ForensicFreak"

chesapeakestripper: Hannibal 100%. No doubt.

>>> *[7:45]* replyto: "ForensicFreak"

The_Real_Will_Graham: I do

>>>> *[7:48]* replyto: "The_Real_Will_Graham"

chesapeakestripper: HAHAHAHAHA

>>>> *[7:48]* replyto: "The_Real_Will_Graham"

chesapeakestripper: Okay, bottom.

>>>>> *[7:51]* replyto: "chesapeakestripper"

The_Real_Will_Graham: rude

>>>>> *[7:51]* replyto: "chesapeakestripper"

The_Real_Will_Graham: my boyfriend will be hearing about this

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